

Molly McGuire

From: Molly McGuire
Sent: Wednesday, October 1, 2025 11:11 AM
To: callahan.ryan@gmail.com
Cc: jennifer.h.callahan@gmail.com; Deb Estrada
Subject: RE: RZN25-001; SEP25-017 Mercer Island City Property Proposed Rezone

Hi Ryan and Jennifer,

Thank you for submitting public comment on the City of Mercer Island Rezone application, City file no. RZN25-001. Your comment has been received and included in the public record.

Sincerely,

Molly McGuire

Senior Planner
City of Mercer Island – Community Planning & Development
206-275-7712 | www.mercerisland.gov

Notice: Emails and attachments may be subject to disclosure pursuant to the Public Records Act (chapter 42.56 RCW).

The City of Mercer Island utilizes a hybrid working environment. Please see the City's [Facility and Program Information](#) page for City service hours of operation.

From: Ryan Callahan <callahan.ryan@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 30, 2025 8:54:37 PM
To: City Clerk <cityclerk@mercerisland.gov>
Cc: Jennifer Hart <jennifer.h.callahan@gmail.com>
Subject: RZN25-001; SEP25-017 Mercer Island City Property Proposed Rezone

Dear Planning Commission Members and City Council,

I am writing to formally oppose the proposed reclassification of parcel 9601 SE 36th Street from Residential (R-8.4) to Public Institution (PI) for a Public Safety and Maintenance facility. As a nearby resident, I strongly advocate for maintaining the residential zoning and developing this property with homes as originally intended, rather than legitimizing an incompatible industrial use that has already negatively impacted our neighborhood.

EXISTING USE IS A DETRIMENT TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD: The site is currently being used as a maintenance facility, and the City has failed to maintain this property to the standards expected in a residential neighborhood. The property is poorly maintained and has become a visual blight—a black eye on our otherwise well-kept residential area. Facilities and overgrowth visible from SE 40th St. are entirely inconsistent with the residential character our neighbors work hard to maintain. This substandard maintenance has already depreciated surrounding property values and diminished our neighborhood's appeal. The proposed rezone will only further diminish property values.

PREFERENCE FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT: These parcels were originally zoned residential for good reason—they are located within an established residential neighborhood. I strongly prefer that this property be developed with homes per the original zoning intent. Residential development would enhance our community, maintain property values, increase the tax base through private ownership, and restore the neighborhood cohesion that has been disrupted by the current industrial use. The City should not be permitted to permanently convert residential land to industrial use simply because it has been operating a facility there, particularly when that facility has been poorly maintained.

RETROACTIVE LEGITIMIZATION OF NON-CONFORMING USE: This rezoning application appears to be an attempt to retroactively legitimize a use that may not currently conform to the property's residential zoning. The City should not reward its own non-compliance by granting a rezone. If the current use violates R-8.4 residential zoning requirements, the proper remedy is to relocate the facility to appropriately zoned land and restore this property to residential use—not to change the zoning to accommodate an existing violation. Allowing retroactive rezoning to legitimize potentially non-conforming uses sets a dangerous precedent that undermines the integrity of our zoning code and eliminates protections for residential neighborhoods.

INCOMPATIBILITY WITH RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER: The proposed rezoning would permanently authorize industrial-scale operations in a purely residential zone. Maintenance facilities generate significant noise from heavy equipment, vehicles, machinery, power tools, and backup alarms beginning in early morning hours when crews depart for daily operations. As nearby residents have already experienced, this activity directly conflicts with the quiet residential character our neighborhood was designed to maintain. Rather than formalizing this incompatible use, the City should restore the property to its intended residential purpose.

ADVERSE PROPERTY VALUE IMPACTS: Research consistently demonstrates that industrial and utility facilities adjacent to residential properties decrease surrounding home values by 5-10%. The current maintenance facility—with its poor upkeep, heavy vehicle traffic, equipment storage, and industrial operations—has already created negative externalities that diminish the desirability and market value of neighboring homes. Granting this rezone would permanently codify these impacts rather than correcting them. Conversely, developing the property with quality residential homes would enhance property values throughout the neighborhood.

INCREASED TRAFFIC AND SAFETY CONCERNS: The maintenance facility generates substantial daily truck traffic, including large municipal vehicles, equipment haulers, and service trucks. This heavy vehicle presence on residential streets poses safety risks to children, pedestrians, and local traffic patterns while degrading road conditions. Residential development would generate normal neighborhood traffic patterns consistent with surrounding properties and far less disruptive than industrial operations.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND QUALITY OF LIFE IMPACTS: The SEPA review identifies probable significant adverse environmental impacts. Maintenance facilities typically involve fuel storage, chemical handling, equipment washing operations, and outdoor material storage—all of which are inappropriate adjacent to residential properties and may pose long-term environmental and health concerns. The fact that these operations may already be occurring—and that the City has failed to properly maintain the site—does not justify making them permanent through rezoning.

ALTERNATIVE SITES AVAILABLE FOR CITY OPERATIONS: The City owns other properties already zoned for public or commercial use that would be appropriate for maintenance facility operations. If the City requires this facility, it should be relocated to properly zoned land. These residential parcels should be made available for their intended use—residential development. The City could even sell the property to recover costs and reduce its maintenance burden while allowing private homeowners to develop quality residences that enhance rather than detract from our neighborhood.

FACILITY EXPANSION CONCERNS: The application notes plans to "construct a new Public Safety and Maintenance (PSM) Facility on the site." This suggests not merely continuing existing operations, but potentially expanding them. Any such expansion would further intensify the incompatible industrial use in our residential neighborhood, increase the visual blight, and compound the negative impacts we already experience.

DOUBLE STANDARD: It is particularly troubling that the City, which enforces strict maintenance and appearance standards on residential property owners, has failed to maintain its own property to acceptable standards in our neighborhood. Private residents face fines and citations for far less egregious violations than what the City has allowed on this property. If the City cannot maintain this property to residential neighborhood standards, it should not own property in residential zones.

REQUEST FOR DENIAL AND RESIDENTIAL RESTORATION: I respectfully urge the Planning Commission to deny this reclassification request and direct City staff to:

1. Investigate whether current operations comply with R-8.4 residential zoning requirements
2. Identify alternative sites that are appropriately zoned for maintenance facility operations
3. Develop a plan to relocate this facility to a non-residential location
4. Restore the subject property to residential use through sale or development of single-family homes consistent with surrounding properties

The proper solution is not to rezone residential land to accommodate an industrial facility that has been poorly maintained, but rather to relocate City operations and allow this property to fulfill its intended residential purpose. This would benefit the neighborhood, restore property values, and demonstrate the City's commitment to maintaining the residential character of our community.

Our residential neighborhood has been carefully developed and maintained over decades by private homeowners who take pride in their properties. The City should be held to the same standard. Granting this rezone would permanently sacrifice residential land to legitimize an incompatible use that has already proven detrimental to our neighborhood. I urge you to deny this application and work toward returning these parcels to residential use as originally intended.

ALTERNATE PROPOSAL SUGGESTION: I would however be willing to entertain a revised rezone that provides residential properties continuously along SE 40th St. and a public walking/bike path from SE 40th for neighborhood access to city hall and surrounding businesses and the bike trail (especially now that the JCC has closed the trail that used to exist next to the JCC). Converting a small amount of Parcel 9601 to actual residential properties would raise funds for the project and better align with the original intended use, significantly increasing the quality of the neighborhood.

Thank you for considering this opposition. Please confirm that my email has been received and added to the public record.

Respectfully submitted,

Ryan Callahan & Jennifer Hart

4020 96th Ave SE, Mercer Island, 98040

206.917.9345