

# Agenda Bill

City Council Regular Meeting

April 01, 2025



**SUBJECT:** Town Center Plan and Code Amendment Project: SEIS Progress Check In, Review of Conceptual Changes, and Delivery Schedule

**DATE SUBMITTED:** March 21, 2025

**DEPARTMENT:** Community Development

**NEEDED FROM COUNCIL:**  Action  Direction  Informational

**RECOMMENDATION:** Receive a presentation on the Town Center Plan and Code Amendment project status and provide confirmation of range of proposed/conceptual draft amendments in anticipation of SEIS and draft Plan release in May of 2025.

**EXHIBITS:** [1. Exhibit 1 - Project Meeting Dates and Supplemental Materials](#)




**BUDGET:**

Total dollar amount \$235,732

Fund(s) BARS Code 001-058-558-30-41-00

- Approved in budget**  
 **Budget reallocation required**  
 **No budgetary impact**

**WORK PLAN FOCUS AREAS:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/>  Transportation                    | <input type="checkbox"/>  Community Safety                |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  Communication & Engagement        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  Community Livability |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  High Performing Government        | <input type="checkbox"/>  Culture & Recreation            |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  Environmental Health & Protection | <input type="checkbox"/>  Financial Sustainability        |

## NEEDED FROM COUNCIL:

Following twelve City Council, Planning Commission, or other public meetings held between October 2023 and February 2025 (see Exhibit 1), where the Town Center Plan and Code Amendment project was discussed and/or confirmed as a priority work plan item, and following presentation of scoping comments received from the community at the February 18, 2025 City Council meeting, what final questions or direction does the Council have on the scope of amendments proposed for the Town Center Plan and Code update project? DSEIS and Plan amendment work is underway and draft documents are scheduled to be released in the second half of May. Staff will be looking for majority direction on any changes to the project scope.

## KEY FACTS AND INFORMATION SUMMARY:

### Background

Much has changed since the Town Center Plan and Code was adopted in 2008 and 2010. The State, Region, and City have an updated planning foundation (see RELATED CITY GOALS, POLICIES, AND MASTER PLANS section

below). A range of reasons, which are detailed below, initiated the direction to City staff to review and amend the 2008 Town Center Plan and implementing development regulations. This work is included as a City Council priority on the City's adopted 2025 Workplan (Goal #5). It is required to align the Plan with the broader foundation of City planning efforts and into compliance with recent State mandates.

This effort officially began in October of 2023, was delayed for a period of time in 2024, and is now moving towards the next phase of the process with the issuance of a draft of the proposed plan amendments and the supporting Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) in late May. The project schedule and process steps are outlined below. A complete list of meetings where the Town Center Plan and Code Amendment project was discussed and/or confirmed as a priority work plan item held since October of 2023 is included as **Exhibit 1**.

As the project team works towards this next step, final feedback from the City Council is sought to round out this phase of the process. Given that the City Council has now had an opportunity to review feedback provided through the SEIS scoping public comment period, which was presented at the [February 18, 2025, City Council meeting](#), the project team wanted to provide one final opportunity for City Council feedback on the range of items being considered as the scope for the updates to the Town Center Plan and Code.

To help frame the issues for the Council and the public, the project team has provided an outline of:

- 1) Why this Plan and Code amendment/update effort is needed;
- 2) What is not proposed to be changed;
- 3) What is proposed to be changed; and
- 4) What is the process and how/when to best engage and provide feedback?

### 1) Why are we updating the Town Center EIS, Plan, and Development Code now?

- **The 2008 adopted Town Center Plan calls for it.** The Plan itself states that "*the City should periodically re-evaluate the development caps.....when actual development reaches approximately one-third of the current maximum development cap.*" (Page 33 of 144) Development in the Town Center has now reached that point.
- **It has been 17 years since the Plan was adopted.** Much has changed in the region, county, and City since the Plan was adopted and last amended. Land economics have shifted, housing needs and trends are different, employment patterns have changed, and community socioeconomics has changed.
- **Regional priorities have a different focus.** The primary reason for updating the Town Center Plan (subarea plan) and Code is to ensure it aligns with the recently adopted 2024 Comprehensive Plan, State Laws, Regional Planning, County Planning, City Planning, and the City's adopted work plan (see RELATED CITY GOALS, POLICIES, AND MASTER PLANS section below). This includes a focus on increasing diverse and affordable housing options.
- **State Legislation created mandates.** The State Legislature has been busy addressing the State housing crisis and has passed many bills directing changes to local plans and regulations. These need to be integrated into the Town Center Plan. Some examples are:
  - [HB 1110](#) requires cities to authorize minimum development densities on lots zoned predominantly for residential use and include specific provisions related to middle housing in their development regulations.
  - [HB 1220](#) requires cities to " plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all economic segments."
  - [HB 1293](#) requires cities to use clear and objective design review standards for the exterior of new development and an expedited review process for project permit applications that include affordable dwelling units for low- and moderate-income households.
  - [HB 5290](#) aims to improve the permit review process for local governments by amending the process for jurisdictions to improve the written determination of completeness for project permit applications, establishing project permit review time periods, and authorizing local governments to add an additional time period for a final decision.

- **The City has a new City-Wide Vision Statement**, which helps guide the review of the Plan: *"In 2044, Sammamish is a regional model for an equitable and sustainable community in harmony with nature. Featuring beautiful natural surroundings, a vibrant park system, lively mixed-use centers, connected neighborhoods, thriving local businesses, and active cultural scenes, Sammamish is a beloved place to live, work, and visit."* The concept of a successful Town Center is inherent to that.
- **Only Allocated Density remains.** The Town Center housing affordability bonus allowances and King County TDR allowances have been used up by built projects and entitled projects pending construction. Without density supplement from bonus pool units or TDR units, allocated density only allows development at R-16 for TC-A, R-8 for TC-B, R-4 for TC-C, and R-1 for TC-E ([SMC 21.07.050](#)). These zoning allowances are not typical of a "Town Center," and development in the remaining portion of the Town Center is not economically viable (see [MRSC's "Visualizing Compatible Density"](#) for a helpful guide on different levels of density). Without changes to the Plan and Code, the remaining area in the Town Center will likely be built with single-family residences or townhomes no different than the R-zones. This raises an existential question about what a Town Center is if it is simply homogenous and no different from the densities of the surrounding zoning.
- **The 2008 Town Center Plan falls short.** Essential elements of a subarea plan are missing from the adopted 2008 Plan. Many of these items were intended to be developed in the years following the Plan's adoption; however, they never materialized (for example, Town Center specific Street Standards). The project's scope includes a review and general update that clarifies and improves elements of the plan and code where they fall short. For example, new street standards will be added to the plan and code, and responsibilities for infrastructure installation will be identified. The absence or deficiency of these essential elements has resulted in continued confusion and disagreement about how development should unfold in the Town Center. It has resulted in costly litigation for both the City and landowners. It is preferred that the City's policymakers set direction for how the Town Center is to develop as opposed to the Hearing Examiner or the Courts.
- **City planning has advanced.** We now know more about how the Town Center plays a role in the future of the City thanks to the adoption of a new Community Vision, the City's new Comprehensive Plan, Housing Plan, Climate Action Plan, Transit Plan, Transportation Master Plan, and Parks/Rec Plan. The City is also currently working on a Bike and Pedestrian Mobility Plan. All of these planning efforts, completed within the past two to three years, provide direction on the future direction of the City's Town Center. The 17-year-old Town Center plan needs to be updated to integrate and reflect these important formative higher-level planning efforts.
- **Housing market and development conditions have changed.** Due to high interest rates and increasing construction costs, the real estate market currently favors the construction of townhomes. At the same time, the Town Center Plan and Code allows townhomes in each district (except TC-E), including the core TC-A district areas. If left unchecked, townhomes could dominate Town Center development with little incentive for developers to build apartments and condos. While townhome development is suitable for transition areas from higher densities in the Town Center core to existing neighborhoods, townhome development throughout the Town Center would not meet the "wedding cake" approach to density described in the Town Center Plan.

## 2) What is not proposed to change?

- **City-wide Codes and Standards do not change:**
  - **Comprehensive Plan Adopted Levels of Service.** Levels of service established in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan are not proposed to change.
  - **Critical Areas Regulations.** The City's Critical Area protections were updated in 2024. The rules that apply city-wide are not proposed to change, and the rules that apply in other parts of the City apply in the Town Center.
  - **Stormwater Regulations and Standards.** Stormwater regulations and standards that apply city-wide are not proposed to change. In 2023, the City published [a report of third-party findings](#) from a study on the effectiveness of adopted city-wide stormwater regulations. There are no proposed changes to the City's stormwater regulations and standards.
  - **Clearing and Grading Regulations.** The City's Clearing and Grading standards were updated in 2024. The rules that apply city-wide are not proposed to change. The same Clearing and Grading

- rules that apply in other parts of the City apply in the Town Center, and this is not proposed to change.
- **Building Regulations.** The City's Building Codes were updated in 2024. The Building Codes that apply city-wide are not proposed to change. The same Building Codes that apply in other parts of the City apply in the Town Center, and this is not proposed to change.
  - **Traffic Concurrency Requirements.** The City's traffic modeling and traffic concurrency standards were updated in 2021. Traffic concurrency rules that apply city-wide are not proposed to change. The same traffic concurrency rules that apply in other parts of the City apply in the Town Center, and this is not proposed to change.
  - **School Concurrency Requirements.** The City's school concurrency standards were updated in 2021. School concurrency rules that apply city-wide are not proposed to change. The same School concurrency rules that apply in other parts of the City apply in the Town Center, and this is not proposed to change.
  - **Water and Sewer Concurrency Requirements.** The City does not provide water and sewer service. For the Town Center, this service is provided by the Sammamish Plateau Water and Sewer District (District), which provides water and sewer service based on the adopted District Water Comprehensive Plan and Sewer Comprehensive Plan. Under State Law, these plans are required to be in alignment with City growth plans. Following the adoption of any changes to the City's Town Center Plan, the City will engage with the District to begin work on updates to District plans to ensure their service delivery models reflect City growth plans. This is a standard process dictated by State Law and is not proposed to be changed.
- **Parts of the Plan and Code do not change.** Broader Components of the 2008 Town Center Plan and 2010 Development Code are expected to remain the same as follows:
    - **Town Center Boundary.** There is no proposal to change the boundary or expand the Town Center.
    - **Town Center Vision Statement.** While the project team is proposing minor clarifications to bring it into consistency/compliance, the 2008 Plan Vision Statement is proposed to remain largely unchanged and has been found consistent with today's planning foundation.
    - **Transition through the Wedding Cake approach.** There is no proposal to change to a perimeter transition (the wedding cake approach). Higher areas of density will be encircled by lower areas of density to provide adequate transition to neighborhoods and areas surrounding the Town Center.
    - **Plan Elements.** Each of the Plan Elements will remain in the Plan. The Project Team will review the language and will update or improve it.
    - **Base Densities.** The by-right allocated densities are not proposed to change. Any proposed increase in density will be associated with the delivery of diverse and affordable housing. There is no proposal to increase by-right market-rate housing. Proposed density increases will be associated with incentives to produce the spectrum of housing types, sizes, and affordability levels in alignment with the items included in the RELATED CITY GOALS, POLICIES, AND MASTER PLANS section below.

### 3) What is proposed to change?

- **Updated Plan Document.** The Plan's formatting will be redesigned with the update and include a new layout, maps, graphics, photos, and illustrations. The existing Town Center Plan will be maintained in its current format as an appendix to the new Plan. Additionally, the planning process for developing the Plan will be updated to reflect the work done through this update process.
- **Refreshed Plan Vision.** The Plan update maintains the themes of the current vision but is updated to reflect current conditions and community priorities.
- **Summary of Current Conditions and Development Trends.** The updated plan includes a summary of current conditions, challenges, and development trends. It will also detail recent and planned development, and provide a summary of the code audit, with the complete code audit provided as an appendix.

- **Updated Land Use Concept Plan and Zoning Districts.** The primary proposed changes include:
  - **Simplified Zoning Districts.** The land use concept plan proposes a reduction in the number of zoning districts in the Town Center from five to three while maintaining graduated density (also known as the wedding cake approach to transition). This will include a core mixed-use center with pedestrian-oriented retail on the ground floor, residential and office uses, and structured parking. Adjacent to this will be a zone consisting of smaller mixed-use and multi-family buildings of three to five stories, with ample open space and an emphasis on pedestrian connectivity to the core mixed-use center. The final zone will focus on lower-intensity" missing middle" housing.
  - **Form-Based Code.** The land use concept will be implemented through a new form-based code that emphasizes the overall form and quality of development and will include the development frontage, street types, and building standards and types. The detailed concept plans from the existing Plan will be replaced with the new simplified land use plan and street types.
  - **Tree Retention and Landscaping Requirements.** The project team will conduct a review of, and propose possible amendments to, the tree retention and landscaping requirements.
  - **Required Affordability.** New residential development within the Town Center will need to provide a portion of housing affordable to low- and/or moderate-income residents.
  - **Updated Incentive Program.** Zoning tools to promote the inclusion of diverse and affordable housing types, including:
    - Increased building heights.
    - Green building and other sustainability measures.
    - Parking requirements.
    - Unit size and affordability level.
    - Multifamily Tax Exemption programs.
    - Refinement of the City's TDR programs.
- **New Street Types.** The update includes new street types for Town Center and concept plans that show sidewalk locations and dimensions, multimodal travel lanes, bike facilities, on-street parking, trees and landscaping, and pedestrian amenities.
- **Updated Goals and Policies.** Most of the existing goals and policies will be maintained in the updated plan. Goals and policies will be updated to reflect current conditions and community priorities while keeping the intent of the original plan in place. The Plan includes new policies for Civic, Cultural, and Commercial uses.
- **Updated Capital Facilities Project List.** The current Plan includes a detailed list of capital projects that need to be updated and coordinated with the City's overall capital project lists such as the City's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
- **Updated Implementation and Monitoring Section.** The implementation section of the Plan will be updated to incorporate Plan strategies and include planning-level cost estimates, priorities, a timeline, and the department or agency responsible. A new Plan monitoring section will identify metrics that the City should track over time and report to understand progress toward achieving the community's vision for the Town Center. The monitoring strategy includes regular reporting and Plan updates.

#### 4) What is the process and where are we in the process?

The process to update the Town Center EIS, Plan, and Development Code started nearly 2 years ago with the development of the existing conditions report and an audit of the Development Code. Between October 2023 and the present, staff sought direction and input through several Planning Commission, City Council meetings, stakeholder meetings, and public meetings (see **Exhibit 1**).

In early January 2025, staff issued a SEPA notice requesting comments on the scope of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) in order to receive input on the project scope. Comments received during scoping were presented to the City Council at the [February 18, 2025, City Council meeting](#) and the [February 20, 2025, Planning Commission meeting](#).

Community Development staff is presently working with Framework on writing and reviewing the draft SEIS and Plan update. This work includes meetings and feedback with other City departments, external agencies, and service providers, such as Eastside Fire and Rescue, Sammamish Plateau Water, Lake Washington School District, and ARCH, among others.

Staff will present an overview of the update to the Sammamish Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club in April. In addition to engaging with the Planning Commission, staff has scheduled meetings with the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Sustainability Commission, the Arts Commission, the Human Services Commission, and the Youth Board to present the plan update.

The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) and proposed draft Plan updates are expected to be complete and published in late May 2025. Once complete, staff will issue a SEPA notice seeking additional public comment, present draft documents to the City Council and the Planning Commission at regularly scheduled meetings, and hold a community workshop to seek further community input. Follow-up communications and stakeholder meetings will be set as needed or desired to solicit feedback at this pivotal point.

Once the DSEIS and plan update are near a final draft, staff will begin orienting the Council, Commission, stakeholders, and the community on the development code update. Changes to the Town Center Development Code (regulations) are dependent on draft changes to the Town Center Plan and findings in the DSEIS. Once draft changes are complete, staff will seek additional input from the City Council and Planning Commission. Staff is also planning workshops with Town Center property owners, agencies, and service providers in June. A final draft of code amendments is expected to be ready by the end of July.

A complete list of upcoming steps, meetings, and background documents can be found here - [www.sammamish.us/TCAmendment](http://www.sammamish.us/TCAmendment).

#### **RELATED CITY GOALS, POLICIES, AND MASTER PLANS:**

[Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2050](#)

[King County Countywide Planning Policies](#)

[City of Sammamish March 2023 Community Vision](#)

[City of Sammamish June 2023 Housing Diversification Toolkit \(AKA Housing Action Plan\)](#)

[City of Sammamish December 2023 Climate Action Plan](#)

[City of Sammamish January 2024 Parks, Rec, Open-Space Plan \(AKA PROS Plan\)](#)

[City of Sammamish March 2024 Transit Plan](#)

[City of Sammamish November 2024 Critical Areas Regulations](#)

[City of Sammamish December 2024 Transportation Master Plan](#)

[City of Sammamish December 2024 Comprehensive Plan](#)

[City of Sammamish 2008 Town Center Plan \(See Page 33 of 124\)](#)

[City of Sammamish 2025/2026 City Council Workplan \(Goal 5 - Page 48 of 275\)](#)

[City of Sammamish 2025 Bike and Pedestrian Mobility Plan \(In Development\)](#)

## Town Center Plan and Development Code Amendment Project

### Exhibit 1: Meeting Dates and Supplemental Materials

**October 3, 2023**

#### Joint Planning Commission & City Council Meeting

- [Meeting Agenda Packet](#)
- [Staff Presentation](#)
- [Public Comment](#)
- [Meeting Video](#)
  - o Presentation begins at 33:58

**November 21, 2023**

#### City Council Regular Meeting

- [Meeting Agenda Packet](#)
- [Staff Presentation](#)
- [Public Comment](#)
- [Meeting Video](#)
  - o Public comment begins at 3:37
  - o Presentation begins at 1:05

**February 3, 2024**

#### City Council Retreat

- [Meeting Agenda Packet](#)
- [Public Comment](#)
- [Meeting Video](#)
  - o Public comment begins at 0:39

**February 15, 2024**

#### Planning Commission Meeting

- [Meeting Agenda Packet](#)
- [Staff Presentation](#)
- [Public Comment](#)
- [Meeting Video](#)
  - o Public comment begins at 2:58:44
  - o Presentation begins at 8:20

**February 28, 2024**

#### Town Center Plan & Code Amendment Open House

- [Staff Presentation and Q&A Session](#)

**March 5, 2024**

#### City Council Meeting

- [Meeting Agenda Packet](#)
- [Staff Presentation](#)
- [Public Comment](#)
- [Meeting Video](#)
  - o Public comment begins at 1:59
  - o Presentation begins at 1:41:17

## Town Center Plan and Development Code Amendment Project

### Exhibit 1: Meeting Dates and Supplemental Materials

#### June 20, 2024

##### Planning Commission Meeting

- [Meeting Agenda Packet](#)
- [Staff Presentation](#)
- [Public Comment](#)
- [Meeting Video](#)
  - o Public comment begins at 2:34
  - o Presentation begins at 12:10

#### July 16, 2024

##### City Council Meeting

- [Meeting Agenda Packet](#)
- [Staff Presentation](#)
- [Public Comment](#)
- [Meeting Video](#)
  - o Public comment begins at 24:31
  - o Presentation begins at 1:54:59

#### October 1, 2024

##### City Council Meeting

- [Meeting Agenda Packet](#)
- [Staff Presentation](#)
- [Public Comment](#)
- [Meeting Video](#)
  - o Public comment begins at 1:54
  - o Presentation begins at 1:43:09

#### October 17, 2024

##### City Council Meeting

- [Meeting Agenda Packet](#)
- [Staff Presentation](#)
- [Public Comment](#)
- [Meeting Video](#)
  - o Public comment begins at 2:01:00
  - o Presentation begins at 8:00

#### February 8, 2025

##### City Council Meeting

- [Meeting Agenda Packet](#)
- [Public Comment](#)
- [Meeting Video](#)
  - o Public comment begins at 9:44

#### February 18, 2025

##### City Council Meeting

- [Meeting Agenda Packet](#)
- [Staff Presentation](#)
- [Public Comment](#)
- [Meeting Video](#)