

# SEATTLE DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS

# MAJOR INSTITUTIONS

# AND SCHOOLS PROGRAM

***Major institutions, such as hospitals, universities, colleges, and schools, play a key role in our communities. This program provides a way for the neighbors of these facilities to be directly involved in their development plans, thus ensuring that neighborhood concerns are considered.***



***Community involvement for each institution's development plan is overseen by a city-appointed Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and staffed by Seattle Department of Neighborhoods.***

## **CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND THE MAJOR INSTITUTIONS MASTER PLAN PROCESS**

Because Seattle's hospitals, universities, schools and colleges are important assets to the region, their development is allowed to exceed many of the zoning standards that apply to other nearby development. Unique zoning rules are crafted for each major institution through the adoption of a Major Institution Master Plan. The objectives of the plan are to balance the needs of major institution development with the need to preserve adjacent neighborhoods.

Both the development of the plan and the monitoring of the development under adopted plans is a collaborative effort between representatives of the major institution, the surrounding neighborhood, and the city through Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) that manages this collaborative effort helps advise the institution and City on concerns related to the impact of development on the surrounding community. The CAC makes recommendations on changes to the plan or possible mitigation of impacts to maintain the health and livability of the surrounding community. The Hearing Examiner, an appointed official who weighs recommendations brought forth from all parties, issues a final recommended plan for the Seattle City Council to adopt.



**Seattle**  
Neighborhoods

**MAJOR INSTITUTIONS  
AND SCHOOLS**

# Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

## MAJOR INSTITUTIONS AND SCHOOLS

### *SCHOOL DEPARTURE COMMITTEES*

Seattle, unlike other cities, does not have a “School Zone.” Instead, schools are subject to the development standards (setback, height, lot coverage, etc.) of the underlying zone. Since most schools are in residential neighborhoods and are often zoned “single family,” this can present challenges. Many school sites were established years ago and do not meet the current zoning requirements. Additionally, older school buildings are much smaller than those now being built or planned. As a result, in most cases where a school is being renovated or expanded, it will not meet the underlying zoning requirements.

The land use code contains provisions whereby the Seattle School District can request exemptions, also known as departures, from the provisions of the land use code. In order to ensure that the views of nearby neighbors of the school and the surrounding community are given weight in any City decision to allow departures from the zoning, a Departure Committee is formed primarily with nearby neighbors of the school. The purpose of the committee is to review the departures requested, listen to and solicit the views of neighbors, and make a recommendation to the Director of the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) concerning granting, denying, or conditioning any departures requested.

### *SCHOOL USE ADVISORY COMMITTEES*

The School Use Advisory Committee (SUAC) process was established to ensure there is neighborhood input when Seattle Public School buildings are being repurposed for other uses. Its intent is to establish criteria for any non-school use.

The SUAC process is initiated only after the Seattle Public Schools has made a final decision to close a school or a portion of a school building because it is determined “surplus” property. After the school has been closed, SPS will apply for the SUAC process to be initiated by Seattle Department of Neighborhoods (DON) to establish criteria for how the school will be reused. Our staff chairs and facilitates the SUAC committee to obtain public comments, and for making recommendations on the criteria and relevant conditions for reusing the school.



Credit: Seattle Public Schools

### *CONTACT INFORMATION*

#### **MAJOR INSTITUTIONS AND SCHOOLS PROGRAM Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

**Maureen Sheehan, Coordinator**

**Phone:** (206) 684-0302

**Email:** [Maureen.sheehan@seattle.gov](mailto:Maureen.sheehan@seattle.gov)

**Website:** [seattle.gov/neighborhoods/mi](http://seattle.gov/neighborhoods/mi)