



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Seattle Center

Robert Nellams, Director

NOTICE OF DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE, SCOPING OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND PUBLIC MEETING

Proponent Name: Seattle Center
Address of Proposal: 305 Harrison Street

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

Adoption of a Master Plan for future redevelopment of the Seattle Center. Additional construction would occur in multiple phases within a fifteen year period. Project includes parking for 1700 vehicles below grade.

SEPA DETERMINATION: Exempt DNS MDNS EIS
 DNS with conditions
 DNS involving non-exempt grading or demolition or involving another agency with jurisdiction

BACKGROUND DATA

Site and Vicinity Description

The 3,250,830 square foot (74 acres) site is zoned Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3) with a maximum height of eighty-five (85) feet, respectively¹. The site is bordered by Mercer Street on the north, 5th Avenue North on the east, Broad Street on the southeast, Denny Way and Thomas Street on the south, and 2nd Avenue North, 1st Avenue North, and Warren Avenue North on the east.

The site is developed as the Seattle Center. The site is currently occupied by several buildings housing a variety of cultural, sporting, entertainment, and dining venues. The site is located within the Uptown Urban Center as designated by the City's Comprehensive Plan. Urban Centers are areas that are intended to be high density employment and residential areas that are well served by transit.



¹ Refer to SMC 23.47.012.

The eastern opposing block fronts to the development site are zoned NC3-85. The northern opposing block fronts, and the block north of Republican Street are zoned Neighborhood Commercial 3 with a 40 foot height limit (NC3-40). South of Republican Street, the opposing block fronts are zoned Neighborhood Commercial 3 with a 65 foot height limit (NC32-65). South of Denny Way, the zoning is Downtown Mixed Commercial with a 85 foot height limit (DMC-85).

The area is characterized by mixed low-rise multi-family residential and commercial buildings to the west; low-rise commercial buildings, the 1400 space Mercer Garage, and surface parking lots to the north; and commercial buildings to the south. The former surface parking lots to the east are currently under development for the new 8-acre Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation campus and new 1200 space parking garage. The property northeast of the site at the northeast corner of Mercer Street and 5th Avenue North is currently under development for a mixed use commercial and residential project.

Proposal Description

The proposed new Master Plan would replace the existing 1990 Master Plan. The 1990 Master Plan and the Design Principles which accompanied it have served Seattle Center remarkably well. Thanks to voter support of two funding levies in 1991 and 1998, contributions from other public jurisdictions and private capital investments of \$440 million during that same period, much of the campus has been dramatically transformed, guided by the Master Plan.

Seventeen years after its adoption, however, the 1990 Master Plan has served its useful life. Changing demographic and entertainment patterns demand a new effort to define the mix of programs, facilities and open spaces for the Center to meet the changing future. The Seattle Center is proposing to adopt a Century 21 Master Plan to guide the redevelopment of the Seattle Center over the next 20 years.

Four Master Plan Alternatives have been identified:

- No Action Alternative - In addition to the current condition of Seattle Center, this alternative includes yet-to-be-built elements included in the current Master Plan, such as the Theatre District Plan and Theatre Commons and the “triangle property” across Fifth Avenue (which the Center does not own but would want to some day).
- Alternative 2: Center of the Center - The Green Frame.

In Alternative 2, the green space would be organized in a frame around the center elements of the campus, including Center House and a band of buildings and spaces extending west from Fifth Avenue. This alternative does not anticipate acquisition of Memorial Stadium, but proposes measures to better integrate this facility into Seattle Center

- Center House would be retained and made more transparent
- Fun Forest Activity Building would be demolished and replaced with a grassy 4,000-seat amphitheatre
- Fun Forest buildings, rides and paving would be removed and replaced with a water feature, outdoor seating, and landscaping
- A bike corral would be constructed near 5th Avenue North

- Memorial Stadium would be retained, however the upper level of seating would be removed on both sides
 - The existing Seattle School District parking lot on 5th Avenue North would be redeveloped with an 85-foot high commercial building
 - Theatre District would be developed as proposed in existing Master Plan
 - August Wilson Way would run eastward from Warren Avenue North to McCaw Hall, in the current configuration of Republican Street
 - Seattle Opera would potentially redevelop the Mercer Arena for administrative offices and performance support, including rehearsal space, costume shop, and scene shop.
 - No changes would be made to the Key Arena or the area immediately surrounding it
- Alternative 3: The Green Window

In Alternative 3, the green space would be oriented towards Broad Street and downtown in a large green “window”. Additionally, a secondary “window” would face the Uptown neighborhood at the northwest corner of the campus. This alternative anticipates acquisition of Memorial Stadium and the site used for the construction of an underground parking garage to serve Seattle Center. The below-grade parking would replace the Mercer Garage, allowing that property to be commercially redeveloped.

- Center House would be retained and made more transparent
- Fun Forest buildings, rides and paving would be removed and replaced with a water feature, outdoor seating, and landscaping
- A bike corral would be built in the proposed Stadium Garage
- Memorial Stadium site would be acquired from the Seattle School District and redeveloped with 1,700 underground parking spaces, bus and truck parking, bike corral and support spaces, deliveries and materials handling and Seattle Center support facilities, with a grass lid and amphitheatre above.
- The amphitheatre would seat 4,000 in tiered, covered seating, with additional blanket seating to 10,000 on the flat lawn beyond.
- A narrow building (approximately 40’ wide) would be constructed to face August Wilson Way. The bottom floor of this building would support the activities of the amphitheatre, including public restrooms and concessions. The upper stories could be used for a variety of purposes, ranging from public meeting rooms, office, school or health club.
- A below-grade exhibition hall would be located at the garage site’s western edge. The hall would be sized at 60,000 sq ft to provide replacement space for activities currently located in the Exhibition Hall and would be connected to the underground receiving areas.
- Theatre District would be developed as proposed in existing Master Plan
- August Wilson Way would run eastward from Warren Avenue North to McCaw Hall, in the current configuration of Republican Street
- Seattle Opera would potentially redevelop the Mercer Arena for administrative offices and performance support, including rehearsal space, costume shop, and scene shop.

- Parking at the Mercer Garage would be replaced at the Stadium site, allowing for the future redevelopment of this property in some form to activate Mercer Street. This could include hotel, retail, office, and/or other theatre space. The street grid would be reintroduced at Nob Hill Avenue North, breaking up the bulk that currently exists with the two-block garage.
 - KeyArena would be upgraded to enhance its range as a multi-use arena, able to host larger indoor sporting events such as Arena football; and intimate concerts as the “Key Theatre”.
 - Portions of the upper Northwest Rooms would be removed to open the 1st Ave N and Warren Avenue N corner to the Uptown urban center while a small retail pavilion would anchor the new courtyard
- Alternative 4: East West Axis

In Alternative 4, the green space would extend the entire east-west axis of the campus, from KeyArena on First Avenue North through the heart of the campus at the International Fountain to Fifth Avenue North. Landscaping and new building development in the KeyArena zone would help define the green axis. Acquisition of Memorial Stadium would represent a significant addition to the green band.

- Center House would be retained and made more transparent
- Fun Forest buildings, rides and paving would be removed and replaced with a water feature, outdoor seating, and landscaping
- A bike corral would be built in or adjacent to the Center House
- A new, 72,000 sq ft Children’s Museum and 15,000 – 20,000 sq ft day care center would be built in the space between the Pacific Science Center and Center House.
- Memorial Stadium site would be acquired from the Seattle School District and redeveloped with 1,400 underground parking spaces, bus and truck parking, bike corral and support spaces, deliveries and materials handling and Seattle Center support facilities, with a grass lid and amphitheatre above.
- The amphitheatre would seat 4,000 in tiered, covered seating, with additional blanket seating to 10,000 on the flat lawn beyond.
- A narrow building (approximately 40’ wide) would be constructed to face August Wilson Way. The bottom floor of this building would support the activities of the amphitheatre, including public restrooms and concessions. The upper stories could be used for a variety of purposes, ranging from public meeting rooms, office, school or health club.
- A below-grade exhibition hall would be located at the garage site’s western edge. The hall would be sized at 120,000 sq ft to provide replacement space for activities currently located in the Exhibition Hall and would be connected to the underground receiving areas.
- Theatre District would be developed as proposed in existing Master Plan
- August Wilson Way would run eastward from Warren Avenue North to McCaw Hall, in the current configuration of Republican Street
- The Mercer Arena would be redeveloped privately as a hotel or commercial development with an 85-foot height limit
- Parking at the Mercer Garage would be replaced at the Stadium site, allowing for the future redevelopment of this property in some form to activate Mercer Street.

This could include hotel, retail, office, and/or other theatre space. The street grid would be reintroduced at Nob Hill Avenue North, breaking up the bulk that currently exists with the two-block garage.

- KeyArena would be renovated to accommodate two performance venues with a permanent separation. The northern venue would serve the concert market of either 5,000 to 8,000 while the southern venue would create a club-like setting, with a stage and seating for 1,500 at tables, taking advantage of the food service facilities left by the Sonics for full service dining and entertainment. There is also capacity in the upper bowl for additional theatre style seating.
- At the north end of the KeyArena, the upper Northwest rooms, Rainier, Olympic and San Juan suite, would be replaced with a smaller footprint building of a height to be determined (for purpose of maximum flexibility, the full height of 85' will be studied in the EIS) to replace meeting room and possible retail functions and to connect to the Uptown business district and neighborhood.
- At the south end of KeyArena, the collection of smaller buildings would be removed or replaced. In their place, this alternative would include one large building, straddling the KeyArena loading area, to replace the retail, office, meeting room, public restroom and storage uses of the former buildings. Any of these new buildings, north or south of KeyArena, could be a destination for a future interactive gaming and technology center.
- An outdoor activity area, possibly including a skatepark, would be located at the Center entrance at 2nd and Thomas.

Public Comment

Members of the public, affected tribes and agencies are invited to comment on the scope of the EIS. You may comment on alternatives, mitigation measures, probable significant adverse impacts, and licenses or other approvals that may be required. Written comments may be submitted through July 6, 2007, and should be mailed to: Seattle Center, Attn: Jill Crary, 305 Harrison Street, Room #109, Seattle, Washington 98109.

A public meeting to receive comments on the scope of the environmental impact statement will be held on June 28, 2007 in the Lopez Room, located within Seattle Center's Northwest Rooms at the corner of 1st Avenue North and Republican Street, beginning at 6:30 pm. This location is accessible. Print and communication access may be provided at your request.

ANALYSIS – SEPA

The Seattle Center has determined this proposal is likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment. An environmental impact statement (*EIS*) **is required** under RCW 43.21C.030 (2)(c) and will be prepared.

The Seattle Center has identified the following areas for potential discussion in the EIS: Noise, Land Use, Recreation, Historic Preservation, Traffic and Transportation, and Public Services.

The Noise and Traffic/Transportation impact analyses will be a primary elements of the EIS. The Noise Analysis is expected to examine existing concert and outside activity levels, and potential noise changes resulting from the proposed removal of upper seating at the Memorial Stadium (Alternative 2) and amphitheatre locations (Alternatives 2, 3, and 4). The

Traffic/Transportation analysis is expected to examine background traffic volumes, trip generation, trip distribution, trip assignment associated with the proposal, and study impacted intersections in the surrounding area. The final scope of the EIS and the noise and traffic analyses will not be determined until completion of the scoping period that begins with the publication of this determination.

Other Elements of the Environment

As the project is subject to SEPA review, the Seattle Center has determined this proposal is not likely to have significant adverse impacts on Earth, Air, Water, Plants and Animals, Energy and Natural Resources, Light and Glare, Aesthetics (Height, Bulk and Scale), Cultural Preservation, and Utilities, but may have adverse impacts, which would need to be disclosed, analyzed and potentially mitigated. Construction impacts and other elements may be included as a result of comments received during the scoping period.

Alternatives

The EIS shall discuss reasonable alternatives including, but not limited to, the three proposed Master Plan alternatives and no action. Reasonable alternatives shall include actions that could be feasibly attained or approximate the proposal's objective, but at a lower environmental cost. The Master Plan alternatives could consist of proposals with less overall lot coverage, improvements to pedestrian and vehicular traffic operations—e.g. change in access; changes in the parking or venue locations—in proportion to the impacts of the project. The no action alternative would examine impacts as if there was no change to the existing 1990 Master Plan.

DECISION – SEPA

The responsible official on behalf of the lead agency made this decision after review environmental information available to the Seattle Center through the work of the Century 21 Committee and other previous studies.

The intent of this declaration is to satisfy the requirement of the State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21.C), including the requirement to inform the public of agency decisions pursuant to SEPA.

[] Determination of Non-Significance. This proposal has been determined to not have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is not required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(C).

[X] **Determination of Significance.** This proposal has or may have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(C).

Signature: (signature on file) Date: June 14, 2007

Robert Nellams, Director
Seattle Center