



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649

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LPB 260/26

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

**The McKinney Center for Community and Economic Development / former Seattle Opportunities Industrialization Center (SOIC) / former Seattle Vocational Institute (SVI)
2100-2120 S Jackson Street**

Legal Description:

All of Lots 1-5 and a portion of Lots 6-14, Block 4, Jackson Street Addition, as enclosed by a line described as follows: beginning on east line of said Block 4, 10 feet south of NE corner thereof thence south along said east line 260 feet, thence west along line parallel with south line of said Block 4, 130 feet, thence northwesterly along line drawn to a point on west line of said block distance 10 feet south of northwest corner thereof, thence east 200 feet to point of beginning.

At the public meeting held on September 16, 2026, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of The McKinney Center for Community and Economic Development at 2100-2120 S Jackson Street as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

- A. It is the location of, or is associated in a significant way with, an historic event with a significant effect upon the community, City, state, or nation.
- B. It is associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the history of the City, state, or nation.
- C. It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, City, state or nation.
- D. It embodies the distinct visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or of a method of construction.
- E. It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder.

- F. Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the City and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or the City.

The Features of the Landmark to be Preserved Include:

The site, defined as an area bound by the west, south, and east property lines, and a line drawn parallel to the north face of the building measured 20' out from the exterior wall of Floors 2-6; the exterior of the building; atrium stair, and open volume of the atrium.

DESCRIPTION

Neighborhood Setting

The subject property is located on S Jackson Street in the heart of the Central Area, Seattle's historically Black community that is now commonly called the Central District. The property is situated near several local parks and landmarks that speak to the neighborhood's historic character. Directly to the west of the building is Dr. Blanche Lavizzo Park, named for the first African American woman pediatrician in Washington and first medical director of the Odessa Brown Children's Clinic. The narrow tree-lined park is located between 21st Ave S and 22nd Ave S and features a play area for children built directly across from the entrance to the building, as well as public amenities such as a picnic shelter, grills, and a small amphitheater. The McKinney Center, among other organizations, provided support in 2023 for the renovation of the park. Pratt Park, located northwest of the property, is named for Edwin T. Pratt, a civil rights leader, executive director of the Seattle Urban League in the 1960s, and a co-founder of both the Central Area Motivation Program and the SOIC. Edwin Pratt was a contemporary and friend of Rev. Dr. Samuel B. McKinney, for whom the building is now named.

Several city landmarks are also located within a quarter mile of the property, including Fire Station #6 (now the William Grose Center for Cultural Innovation), the Yesler Houses, and the Douglass-Truth Library. Notably, the Douglass-Truth Library houses a collection of over 10,000 items in its African American Collection and includes the Louise Jones McKinney Reading Room, making it a "point of pride and dignity for the Central District and the Black community".

The property is also situated next to a cluster of buildings and open spaces that directly serve the community. Across S Jackson St. to the south is Washington Middle School, south of which one can access Judkins Park. To the northeast of the property is the Sea Mar Cannon House, an assisted living facility, and the Catholic Community Services of Western Washington, a social services organization. To the northwest of the property is the Odessa Brown Children's Clinic and the Carolyn Downs Family Medical Center, each of which cater to the population in the Central Area.

Site

The site is a 0.98-acre parcel at the corner of S Jackson St and 22nd Ave S. The southern boundary of the land parcel is set back from S Jackson St by approximately 30 to 40 feet, with the land to the south and west of the parcel belonging to the City of Seattle's Dr. Blanche Lavizzo Park. The east side of the property abuts the sidewalk along 22nd Ave S, while the north boundary abuts S Main St.

The building is situated on the southern half of the property, touching the lot lines on the west, south, and east. The northern half of the property is paved to accommodate parking. There are dense, mature trees surrounding the building on all sides, softening the modern lines of the structure and partially obscuring view of the building.

The Building

The building is six stories and has a trapezoidal plan, with the northwest corner of the building extending further west than the southwest corner. It presents a compact, cubic massing and contains 111,000 square feet. Each floor is clearly expressed through the continuous bands of siding and fenestration that produces clean horizontal lines, giving the building a layered appearance. The rounded corners soften the geometry, with the entrance on the southwest corner acting as a visual anchor.

The primary façade of the building faces S Jackson St. with the main entrance situated on the southwest corner. An additional entrance located on the north façade leads to the ground floor, which allowed the building to accommodate classes involving large equipment such as automotive and carpentry. The exterior envelope is clad primarily with green, horizontal metal siding and silver horizontal and vertical bands that form a distinctive grid pattern. This unusual finish helps to define the building's visual identity.

The windows are set in continuous bands, clearly delineating each floor and reinforcing the modern linear expression of the siding. They are darkly tinted, contrasting with the green cladding and enhancing the building's horizontal emphasis. These windows are interrupted on the second, fifth, and sixth floors by a large square four-paned window in a grid pattern that extends down, interrupting the lines of the siding. The grid pattern of these windows reflects the overall pattern of the building.

On the southwest corner above the main entrance, the windows are positioned vertically and feature metal mullions that accentuate the curvature of the corner. The grid pattern of these windows mirrors the grid pattern featured in the siding, with the variations in the mullions reflecting the variations in the horizontal lines of each floor. The entrance is slightly recessed below these windows, with the second floor supported by a round column that mirrors the curvature of the windows above. In contrast, the east entrance is less ornate, reflecting its use as a secondary point of entrance. It is also inset, but the windows above are rectangular three-paned windows set in a vertical band of concrete. The corner created by the wall to the south of this entrance retains the curvature of the other corners. On the north side of the building, the rear entrance on the first floor is situated below a

vertical line of windows extending up through floor four. These feature a similar pattern and similar materials, including metal mullions, to the main entrance.

On the east and west façades, the horizontal lines are interrupted by a vertical oblong projection featuring vertical white metal cladding with regular rectangular windows at each floor. These structures accommodate the interior stairs on either side of the building. The rounded corners of the stairwells reinforce the rounded expression of the building corners. They extend approximately 15 feet above the roofline and allow access to the roof. The cladding also extends up approximately three feet from the roof to form a small parapet.

The roof of the building is flat. An additional cubic form extends up from the center of the building on the north side and houses HVAC equipment. Other building equipment is housed on the roof.

Building Interior

The original floor plan was designed around the needs of the educational programs the SOIC provided. Original floor plans show that the first floor of the building housed open, covered parking and enclosed areas for auto repair classes. The second floor includes the main entrance and lobby, a cafeteria, a kitchen, meeting rooms, offices, and a library. It also included large spaces for the welding and carpentry shops.

The third floor was dedicated to additional technical programs, including typing, plumbing, electrical, drafting, and use of IBM equipment. It also housed the job counseling offices. Finally, the fourth floor included a number of smaller general classrooms with the north half of the floor dedicated to offices and administration.

After the addition of floors five and six in 1981, the fifth floor housed numerous classrooms and offices and the sixth floor included additional offices, accounting, space for a clerical pool, and the organization's board room.

Building Alterations

Though it was originally built as a 76,000 square foot, four-story building in 1974, two additional floors, which contain an additional 35,000 square feet, had been planned from the beginning. The reason for this delayed addition is unknown but is likely to have been financial in nature. Figure 4, a photo of the original building, and Figure 6, a photo of the building after the addition, show how seamlessly these floors were added, maintaining a cohesive architectural style.

In 1996, local firms Johnson Architecture and Planning and DKA Architects partnered to complete a major renovation of the property. Johnson designed the exterior changes which included adding the distinctive green siding and a new main entrance on the southwest corner of the building. Originally, the façade featured a white cement plaster that gave the building a clean, modern feel and the original entrance was located on the east façade, accessed by a set of brick stairs and leading to the second floor due to the slope of the lot.

This new entrance shifted the focal point of the building to the southwest corner and created the large atrium and open staircase that still exist today.

DKA Architecture designed the interior changes, which included “a new front entrance lobby and admissions, computer lab, library, child development center, and instructional dental and medical facilities”. Drawings show the altered elevation featuring the new entrance, per the renovation building plans, and the property site plan as submitted by Johnson Architecture to the Seattle Department of Construction & Land Use.

SIGNIFICANCE

Building and Program History

The McKinney Center for Community and Economic Development (MCCED), originally called the Seattle Opportunities Industrialization Center (SOIC, pronounced “so I see”) and later the Seattle Vocational Institute (SVI), has been a center for learning and development in the Central Area for over 50 years. Constructed to house the growing SOIC program in 1974, this space has improved the lives of thousands of Seattleites who enrolled in vocational and job skills training programs, giving them the tools to seek gainful employment and advance in their careers in technical areas such as welding, plumbing, and automotive work. As a function of both its location in the Central Area and its historic emphasis on training minority students, it has been especially impactful to Seattle’s African American population. Today it is owned by the Central District Community Preservation and Development Authority (CDCPDA), a community organization that intends to continue this legacy of learning and self-improvement by “empowering residents and bridging the gap between potential and opportunity”.

Located in the Central Area, historically home to Seattle’s Black population, the SOIC building was purpose-built using funds from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), part of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s “War on Poverty”. Though the program served people of all races, it was especially impactful for the area’s Black residents. Operating from 1966 to 1986, and from 1974 to 1986 in this building, the SOIC left a lasting legacy of self-empowerment and progress in the neighborhood.

The Central Area has been home to the largest African American population in the city since roughly 1900, and author Dr. Quintard Taylor described the area as having “represented the aspirations of a nascent African American Middle Class”. By the 1940s, when many homes for sale in Seattle included racially restrictive covenants and redlining restricted access to mortgages and financial services, the Central Area remained one place where African Americans could purchase properties. By 1960, the Central Area would both house the majority of Seattle’s Black residents (62.44%) and have a majority Black population (55.22% of the Central Area’s residents). When the SOIC opened in 1974, the area was experiencing turmoil stemming from segregation, urban renewal, and the fight for civil rights. In the historic context statement for the area, Veith notes that “the neighborhood’s situation was made more tenuous by the fact that African Americans residents were often the last hired

and first fired by Seattle's employers". Both symbolically and geographically, the building was perfectly situated to serve the minority population for whom the SOIC program was created to empower.

In 1986, following the federal budget cuts that drove the SOIC organization into bankruptcy, the State of Washington, which had been a mortgage guarantor, received legal title to the building. From 1986 to 1991, the property operated through a public-private partnership as the Washington Institute for Applied Technology. Finally, in 1991, the State turned the building over to the Seattle Central Community College, and the building was renamed the Seattle Vocational Institute. The 1991 handover was enabled through state legislation as part of the Workforce Training and Education Act.

In 2021, the property was acquired from the college by the Central District Community Preservation and Development Authority (CDCPDA), a public development authority created in 2019 to "preserve the unique character and history of Seattle's Central District". After its acquisition, the building was renamed the McKinney Center for Community and Economic Development, paying tribute to Rev. Dr. Samuel McKinney, a locally and nationally recognized civil rights leader. The CDCPDA plans to rehabilitate the building and use it in a manner consistent with its original purpose – as a training and jobs center with spaces for business incubation and community building.

The Civil Rights Movement, the War on Poverty, and the Birth of the SOIC

The creation of the SOIC in 1966 came at a time of great social and political upheaval. Across the country, urban areas were in crisis, with concentrated poverty in under-resourced minority neighborhoods leading to civil unrest. In January 1964, during his first State of the Union address, President Johnson declared an "unconditional war on poverty" to address these issues. In response, the Civil Rights Act was signed into law on July 2, 1964, followed by the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) on August 20, 1964, both of which became lasting legacies for Johnson.

The EOA created a new federal office, the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). The OEO became the grant funding organization through which the funds appropriated by the EOA were apportioned to states and programs. It was also responsible for ensuring compliance with the Civil Rights Act, using the threat of withheld funds to ensure compliance. Roughly half of the EOA funding went to the Community Action Program (CAP), a newly created program that provided "services, assistance, and other activities to give promise of progress toward elimination of poverty or a cause or causes of poverty". The OEO prioritized grants to organizations "developed, conducted, and administered with maximum feasible participation of residents of areas and members of groups served".

One such program that received OEO funding was the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), a vocational training program started by Rev. Leon Sullivan in Philadelphia in 1964. Rev. Sullivan was a Baptist pastor, civil rights leader, and social activist who preached the principles of self-help. After organizing a successful boycott in 1962 where African Americans in Philadelphia were encouraged not to shop at companies that refused to

employ them, he founded the OIC to provide training that would help the community gain the skills they needed to be successful in those jobs.

Meanwhile, the rise of the Black Power movement fostered an ideology that emphasized racial pride, self-reliance, and self-determination, promoting the belief that “African Americans should secure their human rights by creating political and cultural organizations that served their interests”. With this wave of self-determination spreading across the US, the OIC concept spread to other cities, including Seattle.

In Seattle, the economy was transitioning from traditional industries such as maritime, timber, and industrial manufacturing, in which blue collar labor was plentiful, to an economy dominated by Boeing and the aerospace industry, which required skilled technical labor. Spatially, the African American population of Seattle was concentrated in the Central Area, a result of decades of housing segregation through restrictive covenants and redlining. Thanks to the explosion of maritime and aviation jobs during World War II and the location of military installations in the area, Seattle’s Black population had grown significantly. Despite the need for labor, Seattle was rife with employment discrimination. These conditions, combined with the underlying national currents, made Seattle the perfect location for a new chapter of the national Opportunities Industrialization Centers organization.

Impact on Minority Employment in Seattle

After meeting Rev. Sullivan and learning about the Philadelphia OIC, Rev. Dr. Samuel B. McKinney, pastor at Seattle’s Mount Zion Baptist Church and a civil rights leader in his own right, joined the board of the organization and began plans to create an OIC chapter in Seattle. The Seattle Opportunities Industrialization Center (SOIC) was opened in 1966, initially operating on Mount Zion’s lower level. Rev. McKinney was the organization’s first president and CEO.

Even before the subject property was constructed, the SOIC had a tremendous impact on residents of the Central Area. In 1968, two years after the program began, Richard B. Peterson, a professor at the University of Washington’s Graduate School of Business Administration, did a study of the program as part of a larger evaluation of Community Action Programs in Seattle and King County. He found that in only two years, the program had served approximately 3,000 students including 560 who graduated. Two-thirds of the students he surveyed were under the age of 34 and 59.7% were African American. In terms of economic impacts, he found that 51.3% of graduates saw pay increases of \$0.50/hour or more (\$4.67/hour in 2026) and 15.0% earned an additional \$1/hour or more (\$9.35 in 2026). Interestingly, he noted that while the original OIC program in Philadelphia had been aimed specifically at African Americans, the SOIC was open to people of all races, with white students making up 36.1% of the student body.

Professor Peterson’s study also provides a list of the training programs offered by the SOIC, notably including aircraft assembly, electronics assembly, and key punch which aligned with the technological advances of the period, including start of the “Jet Age” and the launch of Boeing’s 707, 727, and 737 commercial airliners in the late 1960s. Students graduating from

SOIC programs were now poised to take advantage of these local opportunities in industries requiring more advanced technical skills. Despite the “Boeing Bust”, which lasted from 1969 to 1971, the long-term impact of Boeing on the local economy cannot be understated, and by 1972 they were ramping up hiring once again.

With the opening of the SOIC building in 1974, which was attended by Rev. Sullivan, the program was able to expand this reach to thousands more students, creating purpose-built spaces to house programs like automotive, carpentry, welding, and plumbing. Photos from the era paint a vivid picture, showing people from a wide range of backgrounds engaged in welding, key punch, and typing classes. This continued until 1986, when a reduction in federal funds under the Reagan administration shuttered the SOIC program so quickly that students and teachers, committed to continuing their learning, held classes on the steps of the locked building. This setback, however, did not stop the learning for long as the property transferred to State ownership and, in 1991, to Seattle Central College.

In the findings section of the 1991 legislation that transferred the property to Seattle Central College to establish the Seattle Vocational Institute (SVI), the legislature noted the significant impact of the training programs on the Central Area.

The legislature finds that a vocational institute in the central area of the city of Seattle provides civic, social, and economic benefits to the people of the state of Washington. Economic development is enhanced by increasing the number of skilled individuals who enter the labor market and social welfare costs are reduced by the training of individuals lacking marketable skills. The students at the institute are historically economically disadvantaged, and include racial and ethnic minorities, recent immigrants, single-parent heads of households, and persons who are dislocated workers or without specific occupational skills. The institute presents a unique opportunity for business, labor, and community-based organizations, and educators to work together to provide effective vocational-technical training to the economically disadvantaged of urban Seattle, and to serve as a national model of such cooperation. Moreover, a trained workforce is a major factor in attracting new employers, and with greater minority participation in the workforce, the institute is uniquely located to deliver training and education to the individuals employers must increasingly turn to for their future workers. (RCW 28B.50.305: Seattle Vocational Institute—Findings., 1991).

Today, as the MCCED, the building continues the legacy of learning, and the CDCODA plans to “offer a diverse range of programs focused on career advancement, education, and business development” and “house training facilities, incubators for local businesses, and resource centers for job placement, all aimed at empowering residents and bridging the gap between potential and opportunity”.

Rev. Dr. Samuel B. McKinney – SOIC’s Co-Founder and First President

Rev. Dr. Samuel B. McKinney, the SOIC’s co-founder, first president, and first chief executive officer was a local pastor and noted civil rights activist. Rev. McKinney was the pastor of

Mount Zion Baptist Church for over 40 years. Mount Zion was also the home to the SOIC at the time of its creation.

Mount Zion is the largest African American congregation in Washington and the oldest African American Baptist church in the Northwest, serving as the spiritual home of many of the Central Area's Black population. In addition to its role hosting the SOIC's operations, the church played a pivotal role as the site of many meetings and organizations during the civil rights era. In 2018, the church was designated a City of Seattle landmark and listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its association with the civil rights movement, its association with Rev. McKinney, and its architectural significance.

Like Rev. Sullivan, who founded the SOIC, Rev. McKinney was a major proponent of self-help and self-determination. While he advocated for the needs of the Black community, he worked to improve the lives of all those around him, without regard to race. Thanks to his leadership, the SOIC was opened to students of all races, a departure from the focus solely on African Americans by the original OIC program in Philadelphia.

Architecture

The building was constructed in the Modernist Industrial or Late Modernism style. As described by architect William Lorant, son of the original architect Gabor Lorant, the building is:

A late-modern industrial lab & classroom building characterized by smooth curvilinear forms, horizontal ribbon glazing, and a façade with contrasting materials emphasizing precision and continuity. The design bridges Modernism's functional purity with Streamline Moderne's aerodynamic elegance — projecting both efficiency and refinement.

As highlighted in this description, the modern and aerodynamic design mirrors the technical classes being taught within and aligns with the major technological advances in aircraft construction that were being led by Boeing in Seattle at the time of its design and construction.

Through the 1996 renovation, the exterior of the building continued to keep pace with the advances in technology. As noted in DKA Architecture's product sheet:

Work focused on the client's desire to upgrade the interior and exterior elements to reflect the state-of-the-art teaching program within.

In this way, the changes to the façade, entrance, and interior of the building reflect a dynamic understanding of integrity. As the technology of the age changed, so did the building.

Architects

Gabor Lorant, AIA

The original building and its addition were designed by Gabor Lorant, a Hungarian architect who fled to America in 1956 following his involvement as a Freedom Fighter in the Hungarian Revolution. After establishing his architecture firm in 1967 in Pheonix, Arizona, Lorant spent over 30 years designing projects across the US, receiving many awards for his work. In 1988, he was given the Arizona Architects Medal and in 1991, he was named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. In addition to building the Seattle OIC building, he was a member of the Board of Directors for the Pheonix OIC.

While many expected Rev. McKinney to select a Black architect for the project, Lorant's history as a freedom fighter in his native Hungary struck a chord with Rev. McKinney and his own fight for civil rights. In a 1982 letter following the completion of the two-story addition, Rev. McKinney thanks Lorant for his working, noting that he "stood by us through some of the most critical, hectic, and very seldom happy moments when thank-yous were not enough".

Donald King, AIA

Donald King is a prominent local architect with over 50 years of experience, over 30 of which he spent as President and CEO of DKA Architecture. In 2000, he was made a Fellow by the AIA, making him among the approximately 100 living African American AIA Fellows. In 2015, he was awarded the AIA Seattle Medal of Honor, and he spent five years on the AIA National Board of Directors, ending his tenure in 2018. He is also a former Vice President for the Western Region of the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA).

Recently, King co-founded the Nehemiah Initiative, an organization that partners with local Black churches to build affordable housing on church-owned property, capitalizing on the untapped property value to support community outcomes such as income generation and lasting stability. King is also active in training the next generation of planning and architecture leaders as an Affiliate Professor of Architecture at the University of Washington.

Johnson Architecture and Planning

Johnson Architecture and Planning, as it was originally known, was founded in 1987 by Stevan Johnson, a graduate of Cornell University who had previously spent fourteen years as the executive director of the Environmental Works/Community Design Center in Seattle. Johnson has been involved in major Seattle projects such as the Seattle Waterfront redevelopment and has been on many local advisory boards including the Seattle Design Commission. The firm has also been involved in projects on several historic properties including the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library, Odd Fellows Hall, and Queen Anne High School.

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