seattlecenter

Century 21

Architectural Design Guidelines

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Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Elements of Uniqueness 2

Elements of Continuity 4

Campus-Wide Design Guidelines 5
- A Great Gathering Place 5
- Building Design 6
- Entries and Edges 9
- Walkability and Pedestrian Scale 10
- Sustainability 11
- Universal Design 12
- Site Furnishings 13

Zone Specific Design Guidelines 15

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The Architectural Design Guidelines offer recommendations for elements of continuity and cohesion campus-wide as well as specific recommendations based on the zones of redevelopment identified in the Master Plan.

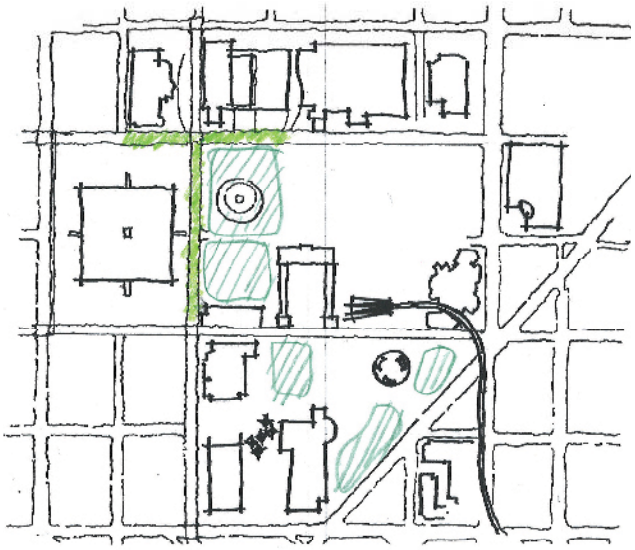
Overview

Seattle Center is home to an eclectic collection of high profile buildings scattered across a 74-acre urban campus. The distinctiveness of its iconic buildings and attractions – the Space Needle, KeyArena, International Fountain and EMP|SFM – is fundamental to the architectural character of the campus. These stand out as elements of uniqueness.

Bold architectural expression on the campus has produced buildings recognized world wide, and there may be occasions for such bold expression in new structures. Simple, straightforward architectural expression also has clear precedent at Seattle Center, such as the World's Fair era colonnades that form the walls of the Intiman Playhouse, Exhibition Hall and elegant connecting canopies. These design guidelines encourage design excellence in architectural concepts and execution of both foreground and background buildings, as the mix is what makes the Seattle Center campus interesting.

There is also great cohesion across the campus with a network of landscaped plazas and open spaces. The diverse collection of buildings is held together by what the Century 21 Master Plan refers to as the "Green Canvas," the connective tissue of green spaces and plazas that serve as the ground plane for the campus. The elements of continuity on the campus begin with the interior streets with mature tree canopies and extend to the open spaces. As major pedestrian routes through the campus, the streets help orient visitors. Large open spaces are also characteristic of the campus. Site furnishings along these signature streets and open spaces are typically part of a language of consistency that helps to define Seattle Center. The campus is the "sum of its parts" and is both eclectic and cohesive as a result of its ongoing evolution from a World's Fair site to a modern, multi-use urban park and cultural destination.

Iconic Buildings and Attractions



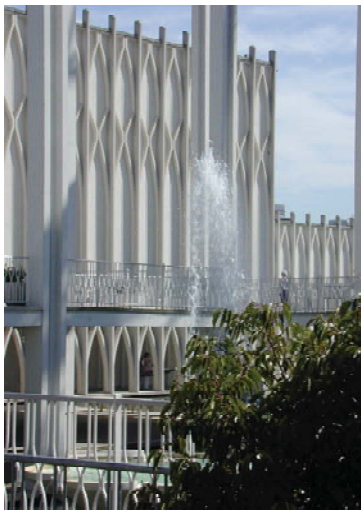
Open spaces and signature streets

ELEMENTS OF UNIQUENESS

Architectural guidelines for future construction at Seattle Center must begin with an understanding of the legacy of its buildings and the spirit that inspired them.

The city's original Civic Center served as the site of the 1962 World's Fair. The underlying street network is still legible on the campus and continues to link Seattle Center and its surroundings. The Civic Auditorium, built in 1927, was remodeled to create the Opera House, and remains today as Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, completed in 2003. The 1939 Armory is today's Center House. The architectural legacy of these buildings and their enduring physical fabric is still visible through subsequent renovations and upgrades. One example is the layering of architectural styles atop a partially obscured art deco façade on Center House.

More legible and visible on the campus today is the architecture of the 1962 World's Fair. Even with the renovations and additions, the architecture of that time sets the tone for the campus with the Space Needle, Monorail, KeyArena, International Fountain, Pacific Science Center, Northwest Rooms, Exhibition Hall and Intiman Playhouse. Other elements, such as the colonnades, were used to elegantly link together buildings at the Fair. This collective architecture represents a clean, light aesthetic from an optimistic and ambitious time with unique forms and a distinct spirit.



Elegant
Optimistic
Vertical

White
Clean
Green

Seattle Center -- A Landmark of Optimism
Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd

Redevelopment efforts since the 1980's have produced a new generation of buildings. The earliest of these include new venues for performance, including the Seattle Repertory Theatre's Bagley Wright Theatre (1983) and Leo Kreielsheimer Theatre (1995), and Seattle Children's Theater (1992) followed by Fisher Pavilion (2001), the EMP|SFM (2000), and Marion Oliver McCaw Hall (2003). The EMP|SFM added a unique contemporary and organic form to the existing architectural icons. Fisher Pavilion was an urban design move as well as an architectural move, opening up views to the International Fountain and connecting outdoor and indoor space with large operable doors. Marion Oliver McCaw Hall transformed the old Civic Auditorium/Opera House with expansive glazing along a new pedestrian entry to the campus, Kreielsheimer Promenade.

Existing structures such as the Exhibition Hall, Playhouse and Snoqualmie Room have remained unchanged on their exteriors, but have been repurposed for resident organizations such as Pacific Northwest Ballet, Intiman Theatre and VERA. The reuse and revitalization that most reflects and celebrates the vision and mission of Seattle Center was the renovation of the International Fountain. Decades of visitors loved to view the elegant water feature in the heart of the campus, but at a distance, as the fountain was a series of individual water shooters surrounded by sharp, slippery rock. Using innovative, sustainable technology and universal design concepts, in 1995 the International Fountain was transformed into a welcoming and barrier-free interactive water experience for all visitors, not just to watch, but to participate in.

The architectural legacy of the early Civic Center buildings is "solidity," which makes the "bones" of these buildings suitable for major remodels.

The most recent generation of buildings on campus connects outside and inside, as shown here at Fisher Pavilion.

The architectural legacy of the Worlds Fair is a body of unique forms from an optimistic era. These structures are expressive, bold and elegant.

McCaw Hall is another example of the most recent generation of campus architecture.

ELEMENTS OF CONTINUITY

Many functional elements exist on campus and work together to provide consistent amenities for Seattle Center visitors. The quality, arrangement and relationship of these elements contribute significantly to the appearance and comfort of the campus. These elements deserve appropriate care and maintenance over time.

Site furnishings present an opportunity to help unify the campus and establish a design vocabulary for the public realm with a similar look and feel, especially on primary pedestrian routes and open spaces.

Seattle Center has Campus Site Standards and Specifications, which provide greater detail to ensure consistency in the design, construction and maintenance of site features on campus. The Seattle Center Redevelopment staff oversees the Site Standards and coordinates with other Seattle Center work divisions on maintenance and upkeep of site features. The Site Standards address the preferred dimensions, type, model and color for a range of common site features including:

- Paving material
- Light fixtures
- Pedestrian streetlights
- Benches
- Trash receptacles
- Bollards
- Bicycle racks

Elements of continuity on 2nd Ave N

CAMPUS-WIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES

A GREAT GATHERING PLACE

Campus character and legibility

New buildings and elements should be sited and conceived to reinforce the cohesion of Seattle Center as a campus.

Consider new construction in relation to the overall campus, as part of an ensemble of buildings and spaces. Some structures should be background elements, especially in light of the many strong building forms already on the campus.

Treat existing architectural icons respectfully, because simplicity and structural expression are halllmarks of the 1962 World's Fair architectural style. Any additions to these buildings should be carefully considered.

Consider views and patterns of movement when siting new buildings and structures, with clear entries and sight lines.

Be clear about which building and site elements are specific to a particular project, versus elements of continuity that are common to the language of the campus.

The crosswalk at the Broad Street campus entry leads to the Center House, but the view is partially blocked by the Fun Forest building.

A synergy of uses

Locate active uses along public edges of buildings, with maximum transparency and generous entries.

Building program should be developed to best support the Center's mission, with uses located to foster and increase interaction between functions.

Consider the ability to open or subdivide spaces, with multiple entry points.

Fisher Pavilion's fully operable overhead doors allow flexibility and the ability to connect outdoor and indoor activities.

Flexibility

Design buildings and spaces to accommodate the wide range of uses and users, that are comfortable and attractive during day and evening hours, across the seasons, during festivals and during quiet periods.

The architecture should allow for diverse uses over the life of the building.

Locate power and other utilities to allow multiple uses.

BUILDING DESIGN

Design Concept

New buildings and architectural elements should have a clear, cohesive concept that is reflected in building form, siting, facade, details, and related site elements.

Even with the very diverse range of buildings and structures on campus, all the successful architecture has a strong and legible concept and an integral consistency. This is true for the quiet or connective structures as well as the iconic structures.

This Victor Steinbrueck sketch of the Space Needle illustrates the powerful simplicity of a design concept. Its elegance comes from the proportion and striking verticality.

Relationship of building and open space

Provide physical and visual connections between ground level interior uses and adjacent exterior routes and spaces where appropriate.

Consider adjacent open spaces and circulation in formulating buildings on campus. Buildings contribute activity to adjacent spaces, and may include integrated weather protection or sheltered spaces, as well as views from grade level and upper level windows.

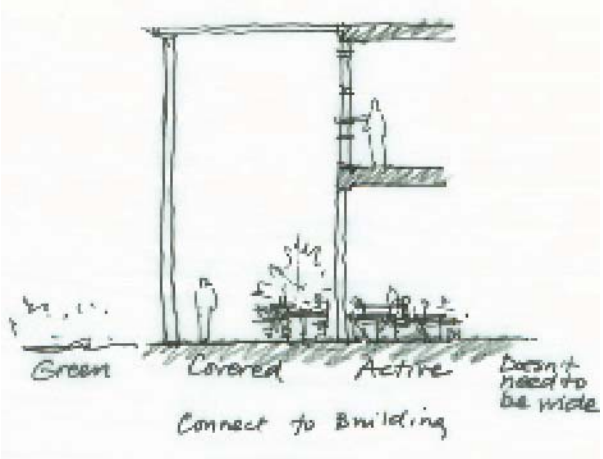
Massing

Consider proportion and scale, shading and shadowing, adjacent users, relationships to other buildings on the campus, and the way buildings meet the ground and sky.

Massing should be appropriate to the typology and function of the building.

Any new building should be a good neighbor to nearby open space and existing buildings.

Respect significant view corridors.



Buildings adjacent to open spaces can provide weather-protected transitions with related activities and multiple layers of overlooks.

Facade treatment

Create a well-proportioned façade with quality materials, highlighting areas of internal activity on the façade with ample glazing.

Facades at Seattle Center will vary with the uses but where possible, should offer transparency and interest to passers-by, revealing the activities inside.

Where blank walls are unavoidable, consider treatments such as green screen or art. In other cases, high quality materials, proportions, and detailing are critical.

Recent architectural vocabulary tends to use large amounts of glazing and steel. The transparency helps activate the campus and blur the distinctions between outside and inside.

A green screen with lush vegetation is used to enliven a blank wall at the south end of Kreielsheimer Promenade.

Architectural elements

Handrails, canopies and other architectural elements should be based on the language of the associated building, but can also take cues from other buildings on campus, where appropriate.

Consider the design language for architectural elements already established at Seattle Center as unifying elements, especially where they are part of the broader campus. Such elements include stairs and handrails, concrete edges and partial height walls, drainage treatment, lighting, and canopies.

Handrail leading down Fisher steps is simple and modern.

Materials

Use high quality materials, appropriate to the use and character of the building. Consider the expressive nature of materials in the spirit of existing buildings at Seattle Center.

Glass, steel, and masonry are favored at the Seattle Center for their simplicity and durability.

Pay attention to the quality of the ground plane, with good paving material, textures, and patterning where appropriate.

Many materials are used at Seattle Center, including metal, concrete, glass and brick. The selection of material is often fundamental to the building design. The Space Needle and EMP are two examples of buildings that highlight the properties of structural and architectural materials.

Materials on campus - metal, concrete, glass - express their structural and sculptural properties

World's Fair architectural columns

Detailing

Thoughtfully detail materials, considering the expression of joints and edges and a high level of care and craftsmanship.

Consider the spirit of World's Fair architecture for detailing that reveals structural forces and the nature of materials. The cruciform columns, pictured below, illustrate an expression of the structure in the shape of the columns and in the way that they meet the ground.

Expressive drain covers are elements that give interest to the ground plane.

Use quality materials on the ground plane as well as the building

ENTRIES AND EDGES

Campus entries

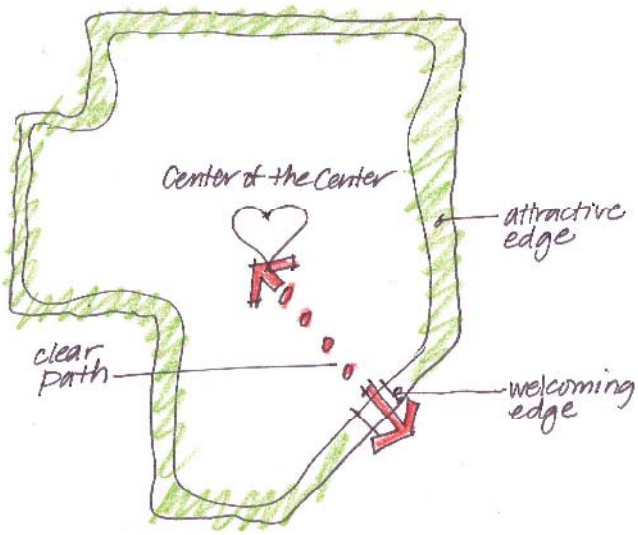
Arrange and design buildings, open spaces and site elements to create welcoming entries to Seattle Center.

Respond to the context and site specific conditions to make a clear and welcoming entry. The entry conditions vary, but should be treated with quality materials that denote arrival at the campus.

Consider the needs for site elements, and arrange them thoughtfully (Bolllards, guard booth, security cameras, paving, ATM machines, etc.)

Consider the ability to limit access to the entry area during festivals and the flow of high pedestrian volumes through the entries during festivals.

Prioritize pedestrian safety, especially where vehicles share entries.



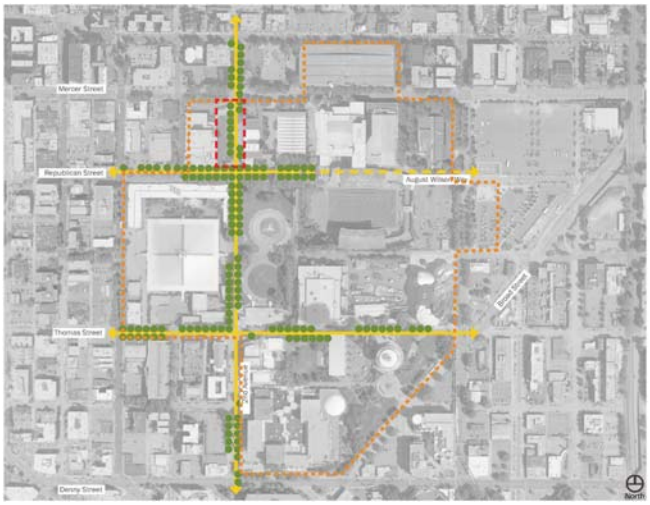
The Century 21 plan reinvigorates the "center of the center". Successful implementation of this approach requires enticing movement to the center via attractive, permeable edges and clear routes into the heart of the campus.

Streetscape and edges

Create a comfortable and welcoming pedestrian environment along the perimeter streets as an attractive edge that strengthens the identity of Seattle Center and celebrates "crossing the threshold" into a distinct place.

Streetscape design should provide a distinct edge to the campus, but not feel like a barrier.

The mature London Plane trees from the 1962 World's Fair line much of the campus' perimeter pedestrian pathways and streets and should be maintained and reinforced as recognizable defining elements of Seattle Center.



Studies of trees, pathways and open space connections through the Seattle Center campus and adjacent neighborhoods.

Neighborhood connections

Link the campus and the surrounding neighborhood with visual and physical

Continue the practice of softening the edge conditions by tearing down former walls and gates that line the perimeter and replacing them with more visual and physical openness that emphasize neighborhood conditions. These connections, like the edge conditions, will vary in design character based on the different conditions around the perimeter of the campus.

Major arterials surrounding the campus on all sides ensure connections between Seattle Center and the larger street network.

Weinstein A-U, GGN Ltd

WALKABILITY AND PEDESTRIAN SCALE

Circulation

Provide a variety of pedestrian routes that draw people into and through the Center.

The former street grid forms a network of pedestrian routes through the Center. Establishing a hierarchy of main north-south and east-west routes, including major open space and exterior plaza will create legibility for navigating the campus. The August Wilson Way plan is an example of creating a main east-west axis.

Circulation routes range from wide, formal interior "streets" to intimate pathways.

Use design clues to assist visitors in navigating to and through buildings.

Use clear and legible signage and wayfinding throughout campus grounds to ease circulation.

Connecting to Transit

Encourage use of transit by making connections easy to find and comfortable to use.

Near key transit stops, integrate seating and weather protection canopies in adjacent buildings, where possible.

Provide sufficient lighting and good sightlines for pedestrians, whether commuters or patrons, who use the campus as a through-route. Active uses and lighting along routes in the evening create a sense of safety and security after events and performances .

Seating, integrated into the base of the sculpture, provides a welcome resting spot for visitors waiting for transportation

SUSTAINABILITY

Thinking campus-wide

Look for opportunities to incorporate sustainability on a larger scale, considering drainage and energy use campus wide.

The campus offers potential for bigger-picture thinking regarding stormwater management and carbon footprint reduction that should be considered early in any design process.

Individual projects should make incremental ecological design progress toward these larger scale goals.

Rain gardens incorporated into the Broad Street Green accommodate storm water in a visible, attractive manner

Impervious surface

Increase permeable surfaces on the campus, utilizing sustainable approaches to paving and ground plane design.

Consider design strategies including green roofs, planted walls, rain gardens, and permeable pavement.

Permeable hardscape offers additional functionality for large events and major festivals without compromising environmental goals.

Energy use

Incorporate sustainable design strategies and systems in new buildings that reduce energy use.

Consider energy use reduction in shaping the building form. Use daylighting strategies to reduce the need for artificial lighting where possible.

Meet or exceed the energy code, selecting glazing systems and HVAC systems that reduce energy use.

Green walls are becoming a common language on the campus, increasing greenery where large blank walls occur

Building strategies and materials

In selecting materials and systems, consider life-cycle costing, sustainable fabrication and embodied energy.

Look at building envelope systems and incorporate green technology.

LEED™ Silver or better curently is the goal for all projects on campus.

Education

Recognize opportunities for making sustainable solutions visible as a showcase for design excellence.

Seattle Center's sustainable strategies will be seen by millions of visitors and offer and opportunity to demonstrate environmental leadership. As a campus with resident arts and science organizations, make full use of campus resources to showcase innovative and beautiful sustainable solutions.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Embrace accessibility in all design decisions

Incorporate universal access as a fundamental part of building and site design.

Design decisions, ranging from large scale planning to the level of the detail, should incorporate the spirit of accessibility, understanding that a philosophy of inclusiveness makes a better environment for everyone. Accessibility offers access, circulation, full use of buildings, facilities and programs to the public.

Ramps are used by visitors in wheelchairs, families with strollers and young children.

Provide access for all levels of mobility

Integrate ramps and railings with architecture and the landscape in strategic locations.

Accessible routes and entries should coincide with the priimary routes and entries for the general public to the extent possible.

Universal Access creates dynamic opportunities.

Utilize the full range of sensory experiences

Enrich the environment to engage all of the senses.

Consider ways to expand the range of senses in design, including tactile elements and sound. Textures and sounds may be used to improve wayfinding for those with limited sight, as well as making a better environment for all.

Emphasize comfort for all

Be generous with seating and weather protection.

Provide a variety of places to rest in order to make the wide variety of visitors comfortable. Consider the details of seating so that people can sit and stand easily. Comfortable waiting places are especially important where people wait for transit, buses, taxis or pick-up by vehicles.

The sound of water can help people orient themselves.

SITE FURNISHINGS

Seating and benches

Comfort is important to Seattle Center visitors, and a variety of places to sit should be offered throughout the campus. Where part of the signature streets or open spaces, seating should be an element of continuity on campus, with a common attitude toward color, and aiming toward consistency over time.

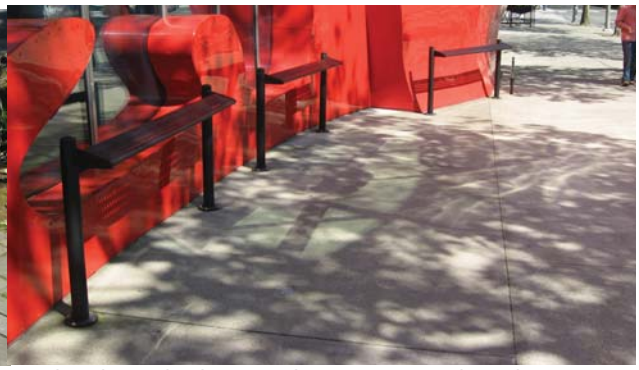
Coordinate the existing free-standing benches by repainting with a consistent color palette and work towards a single standard that can be phased in over multiple purchasing cycles.

Consider integrated seating as part of topographic changes, edges of space or as part of a building edge.

Locate seating where there are opportunities to watch activities.

Consider providing weather-protected seating areas.

Freestanding benches have been acquired over the years; matching the colors would help them serve as elements of continuity.



These lean rails adjacent to the EMP are particular to the expressive nature of the building.

Integrating benches into landscape and building edge conditions is encouraged.

Benches enhance design concepts, emphasizing ground lines or placed as objects in a space.

Other furnishings

The many functional objects and other site furnishings on campus should be thoughtfully selected and located to add to the comfort and attractiveness of the visitor experience.

Trash receptacles: A new standard, which provides recycling as well as trash, has been selected and phased implementation has begun.

Utilities: Continue established practice of inconspicuously supporting "festival utilities" throughout the campus, cleanly integrated into buildings or the landscape.

Bollards at buildings: Security concerns have resulted in bollards added to protect perimeter buildings on campus. Where the bollards are associated with particular buildings, their design should respond to the particular building. KeyArena and the Space Needle bollards have set a language with the spherical bollards that are part of the architectural ensemble.

Bollards at campus entries: Entry bollards, both fixed and hydraulic, should be simple and unobtrusive. Remove temporary concrete bollards as quickly as possible.

Bicycle racks: High volume bicycle racks should be an element of continuity through-out the major entries and streets, with some exceptions, such as the individual bicycle racks shown below that are adjacent to EMP|SFM.

Trash receptacles encourage same style over time.

Electrical equipment is needed for festivals and other outdoor uses.

Bollards can be of a campus language or more specific to particular buildings.

Bicycle racks may be distinctive to adjacent building architecture if appropriate.

Consider other site furnishings to add to the character and function as elements of continuity

ZONE SPECIFIC DESIGN GUIDELINES

In addition to the general guidelines, this section offers specific place-based recommendations to the zones of the campus that were identified as opportunities for redevelopment in the Century 21 Master Plan. The zones are Key Arena, Theater District, Memorial Stadium, and Center of the Center. The remaining areas of the campus, the International Fountain/2nd Ave N zone, and Broad Street Green zone are also discussed.

ZONE SPECIFIC DESIGN GUIDELINES

KEY ARENA ZONE

A new building will hold the corner at 1st and Republican, and its smaller footprint will increase visibility into the campus

1st Ave. N. streetscape is characterized by the tree canopy.

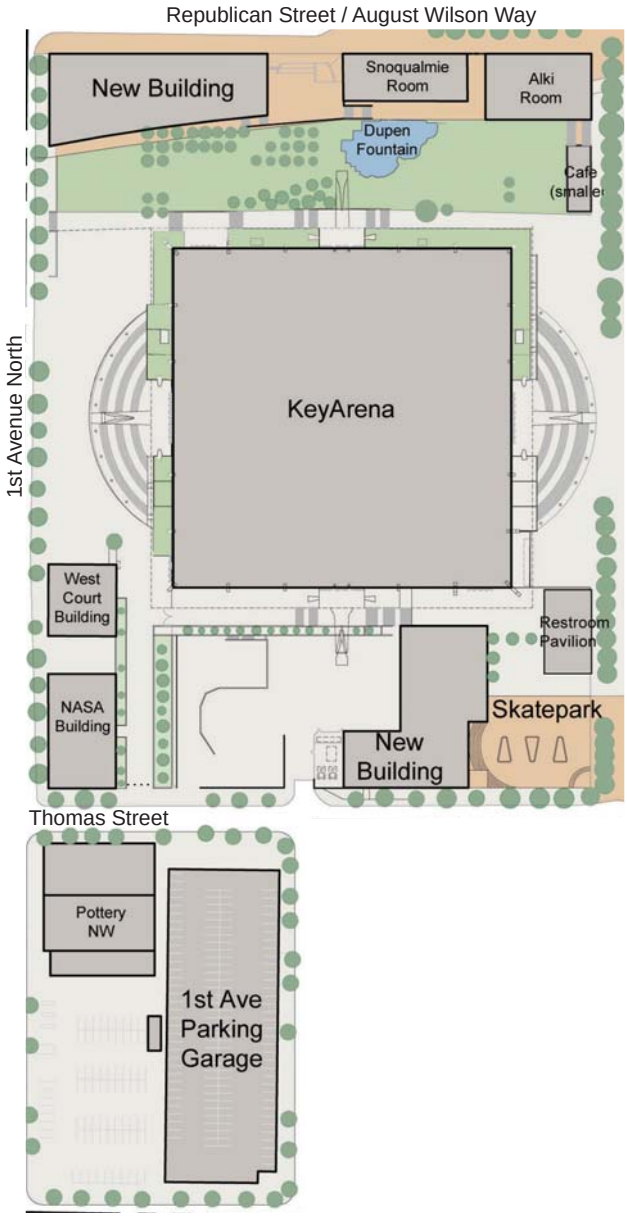
KeyArena Plaza is a primary entry for the venue as well as a major western entry for the campus.

Reinforce 1st Ave. N. as an urban street, with buildings and activities pulled to the sidewalk (this will make the plaza space more distinct in contrast).

Pedestrian access exists around KeyArena, but is challenging at the south edge and not clear at the north end

Entries at far north are an important connection point for the neighborhood

Entry at the Snoqualmie Room is informal and a finer scale that reveals a series of multi-level spaces.



Pull the feel of Seattle Center out to Republican St. between Warren Ave N and 1st Ave N. with streetscape elements and site furnishings.

Transit connections are important at 1st Ave N and Republican St. and will be more so with the new streetcar terminus.

Design to assist visitors in finding their way to transit stops and provide a safe, comfortable environment for waiting.

Placemaking is important at the corner of 1st Ave N and Republican St– it should include recognizable elements of Seattle Center.

Service entry to KeyArena should be discreet.

Hold the edge of Thomas St with a new building and an urban, landscaped edge that blends with the mix of uses in the neighborhood and Skatepark.

Use design clues to help pedestrians know which routes are through routes and which do not lead to the center of the campus.

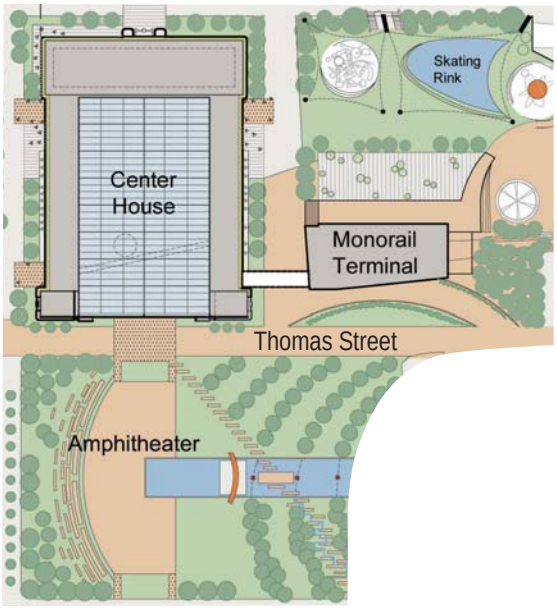
CENTER OF THE CENTER ZONE

Open up the Center House with generous operable glazing, providing associated open spaces on all sides that interconnect with interior uses.

Create the feeling of "front doors" on both the north and the south sides of Center House.

Increase clarity of all pedestrian links to Center House.

Make use of the topographic changes to offer multiple views of active spaces.



Because the monorail terminal is a prime arrival point to the campus, encourage an improved connection of the terminal to the Thomas St. area.

Create a multi-functional activity space north of the monorail terminal that is playful and useful during all seasons of the year. Recognize the relationship of significant open space to the north in the design of this space and its elements

Open up the connection of the Mural Amphitheater space to the east, allowing increased visibility for Center House and a more integrated amphitheater space.

Highlight the Mural as a significant piece of the original World's Fair art program.

THEATER DISTRICT ZONE

Mercer St. over time will have two-way traffic and should become a more pleasant walking environment with generous sidewalks on both sides of the street.

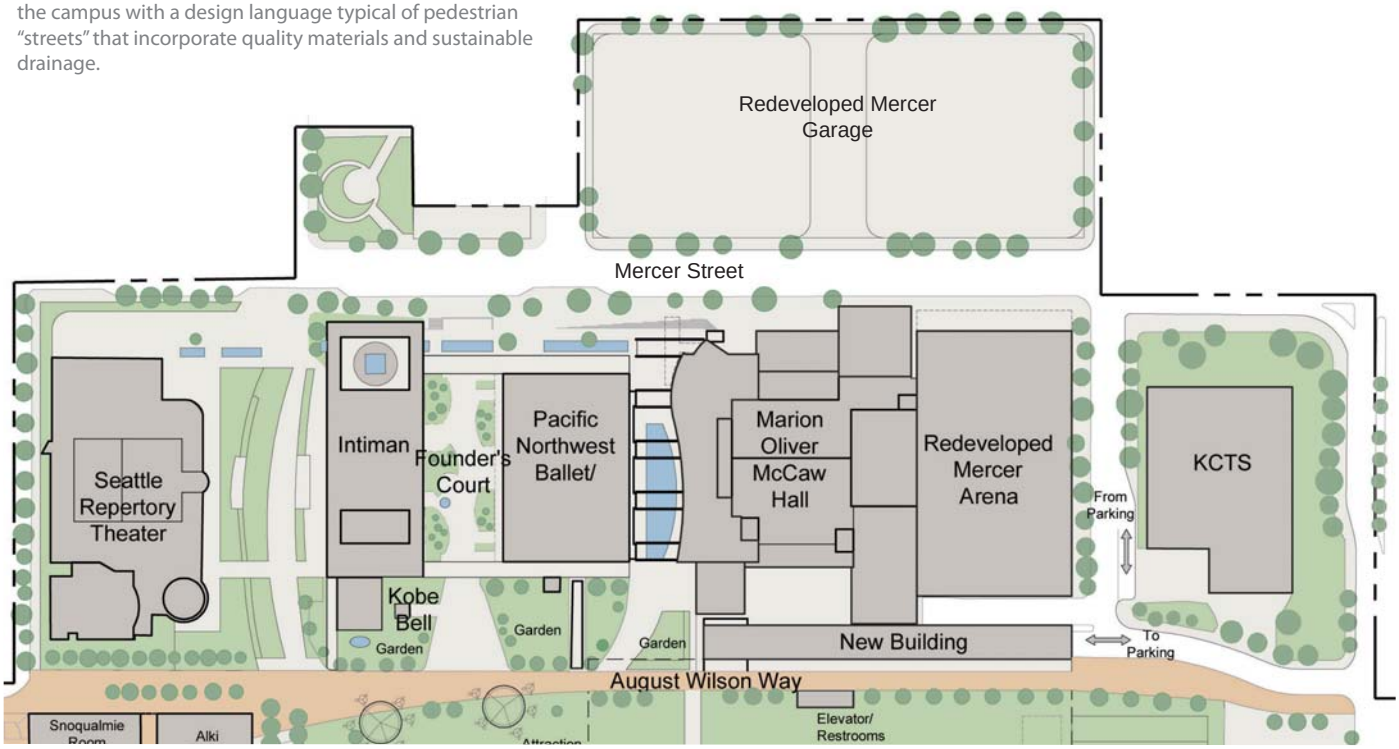
Prioritize quality design and materials for new structures at the Mercer street edge where pedestrian experience matters the most.

Provide adequate space for pick-up and drop-off at venues along Mercer St.

Create a series of intimate scale spaces and buildings along the south edge of the Theater District along August Wilson Way that contribute activity and contrast in scale to the adjoining large open space surrounding the International Fountain.

Entry at August Wilson Way has the tree-canopy linear typology that denotes a through route.

Enhance 2nd Avenue N as a major tree-lined spine through the campus with a design language typical of pedestrian "streets" that incorporate quality materials and sustainable drainage.



MEMORIAL STADIUM ZONE

The new green lid should have an open feel with landscaping at the edges.

Consider overhead weather protection through the large open spaces as an important architectural element.

The headhouses for elevators to the new garage are important architectural elements that should have a distinctive design and be easily recognizable.

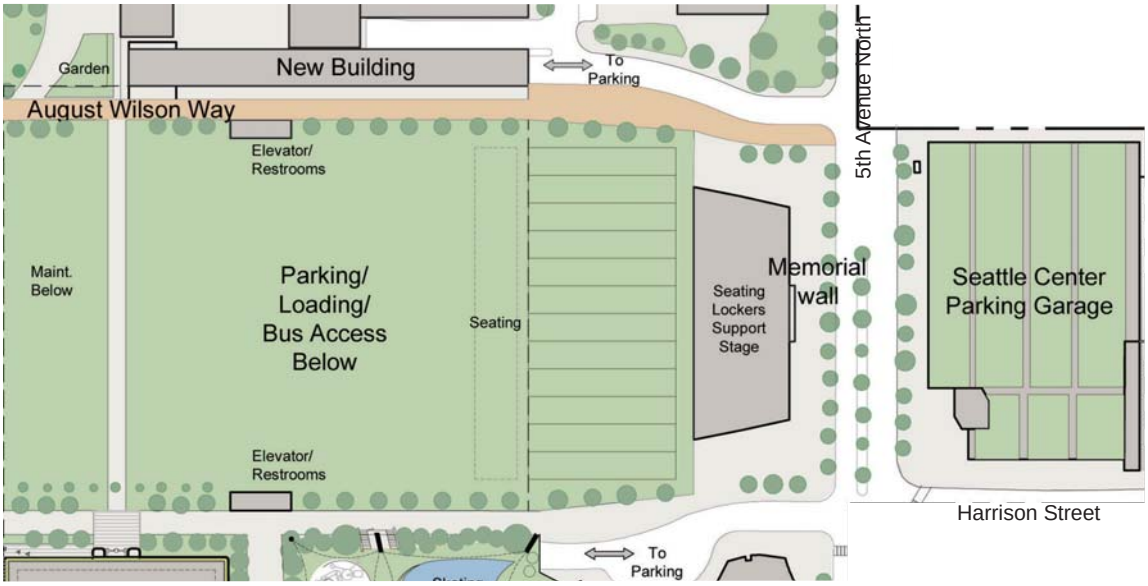
Emphasize the pedestrian character of entries off of 5th Ave. N., understanding that they will also accommodate vehicular traffic entering and exiting the new parking garage below the lid.

The new multi-purpose stage and stadium building should not turn its back to 5th Ave. N. Consider the viewpoint of pedestrians and passing vehicles in creating a high-quality edge to the campus.

5th Ave. N. is the interface between the Gates Foundation and Seattle Center campuses; well designed physical and visual connections at key intersections are a high priority.

In creating the large new green space, make sure that the edges are activated. Look to Fisher Pavilion and the South Fountain Lawn for a model.

Consider the pedestrian routes created by desire lines through the large open spaces, and the character and materials of more informal routes.



FOUNTAIN ZONE

Retain, and where possible, enhance the ability to enjoy the overlook of the campus and its activities from Thomas St. and Fisher Pavilion.

Retain views to the International Fountain as a campus focal point.

Respect the significant green spaces of the Fountain Zone, and support these spaces with well designed edge conditions. The perimeter is defined by London Plane trees around much of the Fountain Zone, and this character should be retained.

2nd Ave. N. and Thomas St. are primary circulation spines through the campus for pedestrians and service vehicles. While retaining the service functions, emphasize the pedestrian nature of these routes and their ability to help visitors with wayfinding on the campus.

Pay special attention to pedestrian safety at the intersection of 2nd Ave. N. and Thomas St.

Continue to improve the intersection of 2nd Ave. N. and Thomas St. as a clear entry point to the campus.

BROAD STREET GREEN ZONE

Consider pedestrian safety at the Thomas St. entry in any improvements to this area.

Use the topography to offer improved visibility for people coming and going and meeting others near the Thomas St. entry.

In selecting plantings in the Broad St. Green area, choose species that will transform through the course of the year, and complement the strong color palette of the EMP|SFM and nearby sculptures.

Take opportunities to highlight the sculptures in this area of the campus, through lighting, landscaped backdrops or the ability of people to interact.

Allow sufficient open space to allow architectural icons to "breathe".

Minimize visual impact of service drives and drop-off areas, emphasizing the quality of the pedestrian experience.

Use design cues to highlight entries to the iconic buildings in this zone, and to assist visitors in finding their way to destinations in the center of the campus.

Create a distinct edge to Seattle Center, protecting pedestrians from traffic on Broad Street.

Consider both the scale of pedestrian experience along Broad St. and the scale of the view from passing vehicles.