



August 12, 2020

Carly Guillory  
Seattle Department of Construction & Inspection  
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-4019  
Via e-mail: [carly.guillory@seattle.gov](mailto:carly.guillory@seattle.gov)

Re: Seattle Central College Citizens Advisory Committee Comments on MIMP Concept Plan

Dear Ms. Guillory,

The Seattle Central College (SCC) Major Institutions Master Plan (MIMP) Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is charged with advising the City and SCC concerning the development of the new Seattle Central College Major Institutions Master Plan (MIMP). The CAC has the opportunity to comment on the Concept Plan. The CAC met on March 2, and July 6, 2020 to review the draft SCC Draft Concept Plan and offers the following comments.

The comments below are a combination of committee and public input. The intent of our comments is to articulate the guiding principles to ensure the final MIMP provides the greatest benefit of future improvements to the College while balancing the impacts to the community and increasing the overall public good. Our commitment to deliver this product over the coming months is based on an open dialogue and partnership with the College. Until that process is complete, the guiding principles of greatest priority for the MIMP concept are included below.

**1. MIO Boundary**

- The CAC recommends careful reconsideration of the MIO boundary to encompass parcels whose inclusion could be of future benefit to the college and whose integration with the campus would provide a more well-rounded urban fabric. The principal parcels of interest include the remaining land on Harvard south of Olive Street and an extension of the boundary along Boylston.
- The plan should also address the MIO boundary's effect on neighborhood character and historic preservation efforts, with specific attention paid to the Lenawee and Porter acquisitions.

**2. Design Standards (bulk, scale, height)**

- The plan should actively incorporate neighborhood design guidelines and attempt to maximize efficiency of space.
- The CAC recommends softening the harsh massing and visual impression of the Broadway Edison Building through human centered urban design, streetscape improvements, and quality materials that speak to the context of the existing brick structures while not mimicking the brick.
- The plan should attempt to create a welcoming, legible campus identity as a place of possibility and interest. The CAC encourages the college to create a campus identity that strikes a balance between a distinct campus environment and one that integrates into the existing urban context.
- The CAC recommends that the college consider taking advantage of the 105' zoning allowances in order to accommodate future student growth and minimize absorption of surrounding neighborhood

land. The college should account for the harsh impacts of maximizing height on adjacent blocks while simultaneously integrating taller buildings into the surrounding environment.

### **3. Public Integration and Community Benefit**

- The CAC recommends that the college engage with students, stakeholders, area residents, Black, Indigenous and people of color communities (BIPOC), and Seattle’s arts community to identify broader community needs and determine how the college can reasonably accommodate those needs within the framework of the MIMP.
- The plan should address how the entire campus and especially the parking garage can better integrate with the neighborhood around it and engage the street while activating frontage through ground level retail and commercial land use.
- The plan should provide a framework for historical preservation in accordance with community needs, especially regarding the properties to be acquired west of the Broadway Edison Complex and in the southern structures that are intended for sale.
- The plan should contain special consideration for the preservation and potential expansion of performing arts space and community gathering space hosted by the college and available for use by the community. The college should closely consult with all local operators of performing arts facilities in the area, including but not limited to the operators of the Erickson Theater, the SIFF Cinema Egyptian, Broadway Performance Hall, the broader performing arts community, the Capitol Hill Arts District, patrons of performing arts community, Seattle’s Office of Arts and Culture, Community Roots Housing, and the Capitol Hill EcoDistrict, in determining future use of the theater space. These are special, regional cultural assets and any decision to sell these properties, renovate them, and/or change uses must have broad input from the community.

### **4. Public Realm and Visual Improvements**

- The CAC highly recommends that the college conduct an organized design charrette to ascertain community desires and concerns regarding the visual impact of the college within the public realm. Additionally, the college should collaborate with committee members who are experienced and well versed in urban design.
- The plan should build upon the information gained in the design charette to address visual and open space improvements with special consideration for streetscape improvements, human-centered design, public art, and civic space. The CAC recommends that the college concentrate effort into breaking up the overbearing brick profile of the Broadway Edison Complex.
- The plan should prioritize the community-driven redevelopment of the under activated South Plaza and activation of the border between the main campus and Pine Street to increase porosity and pedestrian flow through the space.
- Seattle Central’s campus has been used as a central node for organizing in the region. As the college considers improvements or alterations its public realm South Plaza, they should ensure the spaces are designed to support not inhibit an individual’s First Amendment right to free speech.

## 5. **Public Street Access Improvements**

- The college should consider design elements to mitigate the impact of vehicular traffic along Harvard driven by the new student housing project, enhance pedestrian connections and safety along Harvard and between the campus and proposed housing.
- The plan should facilitate increased mobility and access for pedestrians, cyclists, and those with disabilities on and through campus and should better address internal circulation and flow to and between the constituent areas of campus—the northern facilities, the southern facilities, the eastern Mitchell Activity Center (MAC) building and the parking garage and student housing to the west.
- The plan should seek improved connectivity between the campus and neighboring public realm anchors including the Capitol Hill Light Rail Station, Cal Anderson Park, and the Pike Pine Corridor. Special consideration should be given to frontage of Seattle Central facilities along Harvard, Pine, the connections between the MAC and Cal Anderson along Nagle, as well as the connection between the student housing and the parking structure on Harvard.
- The CAC recommends that the college study the effects of rideshare applications on transportation within the MIMP boundary and provide its findings to the committee for greater clarity and understanding. The CAC recommends against the use of pedestrian bridges for either internal circulation or external connectivity across the street on the grounds of cost and the social damage that overpasses exert by removing pedestrian traffic from ground level pathways.

## 6. **Transit Access and Parking**

- The college should conduct a study to determine if a private entrance from the college to the Capitol Hill Light Rail Station is feasible. The efficacy of such a proposal would require consideration and further examination by the CAC
- The CAC would like to better understand current parking demand and the outcomes of current commute trip reduction efforts before providing further comment on the need for new parking facilities.
- The current above ground parking facility does not function well from an urban design perspective. Thus, the CAC requests to be briefed further on massing and design plans for the new parking facility in order to examine the impacts that large parking structures will have on the neighborhood and traffic flow.

## 7. **Student and Employee Housing**

- The CAC recommends that the college conduct a cost analysis to determine if it is financially feasible to acquire existing structures along Boylston and Harvard for future retrofitting into student housing on the grounds of historical preservation and managing the transitions between higher density zones and lower density zones in the neighborhood.
- The CAC applauds the college for considering student housing needs and supports the proposed concept to build student housing within the MIO.
- The college should also consider the housing needs of its workforce with a focus on meeting the needs of its lowest wage workers. Providing affordable housing opportunities for employees within close proximity of campus would reduce the need for onsite parking, minimize traffic and air pollution impacts, reduce the college's carbon footprint, and ensure that the college's workforce can thrive.

- The CAC recommends that the college further evaluate the feasibility of building a mixed-use facility that provides student or employee housing with ground floor student activity center uses on the current site of the MAC.

#### **8. Universal Safety**

- The plan should address how design elements of the built environment can directly affect safety and perceptions of safety.
- The CAC recommends that the college heavily rely on community feedback, particularly from BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, to inform inclusion of safety principles.

Plans for the MAC should include renovation to the building frontage along Nagle to increase visibility of and connection to the park and Nagle for users of the MAC.

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#### **9. Sustainability**

- The plan should address the college's position regarding climate change, sustainability, and energy consumption, especially for new facilities.

#### **10. Background**

- Historically, poor economic conditions have resulted in increased student enrollment and state funding challenges. With potential long-term impacts to the built environment, state budget shortfalls, a prolonged economic recession likely, and unknown effects from the COVID-19 pandemic, the college should reconsider future enrollment and growth considerations.

For the Committee,

Jacobi Boudreaux & McCaela Daffern,

Committee Co-chairs