



SEATTLE CENTER WHAT'S NEXT

Report from the workshop held
13 September 2016

www.seattlecenter.com/whatsnext

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December 2016

Dear Friends,

On behalf of Seattle Public Schools and the City of Seattle, we thank all of those who attended the *Seattle Center: What's Next?* event this past September. This all-day working session brought more than 100 participants together to envision a revitalized future for Seattle Center. Seattle Center is our City's most important gathering place for arts, culture, entertainment, and education. Mayor Murray convened this event to generate creative thinking to make Seattle Center as iconic as Central Park and Millennium Park.

Seattle Public Schools and its Memorial Stadium have always been an important part of Seattle Center. Memorial Stadium serves as a venue for athletics and events for students and the public, and stands as a memorial to Seattle students lost in World War II. Seattle Public Schools is now planning to build a new Memorial Stadium and high school to serve Downtown, Magnolia, and Queen Anne. The new high school and stadium will be exciting additions to Seattle Center.

Seattle Public Schools and the City of Seattle are excited about the future of Seattle Center and to work together to make it a truly outstanding asset for our City and students.

Sincerely,

Edward B. Murray
Mayor
City of Seattle

Betty Patu
2016 Board President
Seattle Public Schools

Larry Nyland
Superintendent
Seattle Public Schools

Executive Summary

Laying the Groundwork

From its beginnings as a civic gathering place in the 1920s through its establishment as a city department after the 1962 World's Fair, **Seattle Center** has been one of the city's most treasured assets. On September 13, 2016, Mayor Edward Murray invited community leaders to help begin to develop a vision for transforming Seattle Center as our population grows and as we continue to be a global center for innovation, technology and creativity.

One hundred sixteen people representing Seattle's arts and cultural leaders, students, architects, business people, Seattle Public Schools officials, policymakers, and community leaders gathered for a full day to make recommendations to the Mayor. The participants rolled up their sleeves and took up the task of envisioning transformative change at Seattle Center.

The Big Picture

Mayor Murray opened the day by challenging the group to create a vision for Seattle Center that would build community, celebrate Seattle's cultural identity, and meet the changing needs of our diverse residents, as well as maintain sustainable operations. Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools **Dr. Larry Nyland** joined the Mayor in welcoming the group and asking for their ideas about how to balance the needs and uses of School District property for a new high school and stadium with opportunities to create a great civic space on the campus. Both pledged their commitment to working together on Seattle Center's future.

Martha Choe, past Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation executive and Seattle City Councilmember, provided examples of great civic spaces around the world. From Millennium Park to the Luxembourg Gardens, these spaces shared key attributes including great design, accessibility, and programs that consistently draw diverse audiences. This underscored that new investments in Seattle Center must serve its core purpose: *to create exceptional events, experiences and environments that delight and inspire the human spirit to build stronger communities.*

Seattle Office for Civil Rights Director **Patricia Lally** emphasized the importance of engaging diverse communities and working to overcome racial and social disparities. We must cherish our diversity and create places and programs to attract people from across our city, throughout the region and around the world.

Attendees also hear presentations about the future needs of the school district, an overview of current Seattle Center programs and partners, the Seattle waterfront and much more.

Seattle Center Director **Robert Nellams** spoke about Seattle Center's roles, purpose and operations, noting that the campus does more than enhance our quality of life. It is a significant economic engine for our region, leveraging \$13 million in public funding to generate more than \$1 billion in economic impact. It does this by partnering with non-profit organizations and businesses, and then investing in things that make the campus one of our city's most-loved gathering places.

With this background, participants were set for the day's core discussions and worksessions.

Feedback: Viewpoints

Workshop participants were asked to consider several questions and help identify key objectives and complexities for Seattle Center planning.

A number of common themes from this exercise were:

What does vibrancy mean for Seattle Center?

- Diverse activities and visitors*
- A magnetic destination*
- Strong partnerships*

How do we know we're thinking big enough?

- Innovation & transformation*
- Diversity & inclusion*
- Relevance for the future*

Top Opportunities?

- Capitalizing on near-term opportunities*
- Engaging diverse input*
- Strengthening partnerships*
- Seattle's prosperity*

Top Challenges?

- Identifying and securing funding*
- Addressing Seattle Public Schools needs*
- Strengthening Seattle Center's brand*
- Overcoming Institutional Inertia*
- Addressing access*



Feedback: Planning for Change

Sam Assefa, Director of the Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development, introduced a second exercise: examining the northeast quadrant of the campus, the biggest opportunity for transformative change at Seattle Center. This area includes the Mercer Garage, the block that includes KCTS, Mercer Arena, and Seattle Public Schools' property (Memorial Stadium and parking lot), totaling more than 14 acres. For the first time in decades, the opportunity exists to consider this area holistically and plan for transformative change that will create social, cultural, and economic value.



In groups, participants were asked to develop a mix of land uses and activities for northeast quadrant properties that would:

- **Propose a transformative vision for Seattle Center**
- **Build community dialogue, equal access, & cultural diversity**
- **Address Seattle Public Schools' needs for a high school and stadium**
- **Help sustain Seattle Center's operations, balancing public value with the need for revenue**

Ideas included: new community centers, a market promenade with music, art, and food; shared use of new buildings for education, community, and cultural uses; and even a new dog park. Participants tried to balance civic and cultural uses with revenue-generating development.

A number of planning ideas were shared by a majority of groups, including:

- **New open space** to the east of International Fountain
- **Underground parking** in all new development
- **Affordable housing** or artists' housing in commercial development along Mercer Street
- **New cultural facilities**, including a theatre, community center, or Native American cultural center.

Many people noted the importance of enhancing vibrancy and vitality through investments in programs as well as buildings. A partnership between Seattle Public Schools and Seattle Center's cultural groups was seen as an important element of several plans. There was also widespread consensus that the campus perimeter could be opened up through new development, with an emphasis on stronger neighborhood connections and more welcoming gateways.

Feedback: Priorities

At the end of the day, participants were asked to identify and prioritize specific actions that would **help propel Seattle Center forward in the months ahead**. Three priorities rose far above the rest:

1. **Establish common ground between the City of Seattle and Seattle Public Schools**
Cement an agreement about Memorial Stadium and a planned high school.
2. **Engage a broader constituency for feedback**
Solicit more feedback from youth and students, communities of color, Native Americans, seniors, people with disabilities, and people representing each Seattle neighborhood to guide planning.
3. **Create a process and timeline for action**
Develop a detailed plan to guide progress, possibly including an update to the Century 21 Master Plan.

Looking Ahead

Beginning in November 2016, the *Seattle Center: What's Next?* team took the discussion about Seattle Center's future on the road. Our team is interviewing people throughout the city to gather feedback and ideas. The results of these efforts will be documented as a supplement to this report.

The City of Seattle, in partnership with the Seattle Center Foundation and Seattle Public Schools, is developing a holistic plan to move toward the transformation of Seattle Center, to be announced in early 2017.

To those who participated in the September 13th discussion, **thank you** for your time, energy, and ideas. We hope you will help bring the issues and questions from the discussion back to your organizations, companies, communities, and neighbors. We want your feedback and we want you to help keep the conversation going.

To stay up to date, send us additional feedback from the workshop, or connect others to the project, please visit www.seattlecenter.com/whatsnext.

Laying the Groundwork

The Discussion

On September 13, 2016, Mayor Edward Murray invited community leaders for a day-long discussion to develop a vision for transforming Seattle Center. They represented Seattle's arts and cultural leaders, students, architects, business people, Seattle Public Schools officials, policymakers and others. The event was a chance to talk about Seattle Center's history and successes, as well as its challenges and opportunities for growth.

The discussion, hosted by the Seattle Center Foundation, was held in order to:

- Share highlights of important work to date involving Seattle Center
- Explore how Seattle Center continues to evolve in response to growth in the city and the region
- Gather best thinking around the challenges and opportunities for the Northeast Quadrant
- Identify and prioritize actions to propel Seattle Center forward

The Big Picture

Throughout the day, people heard from dozens of speakers about issues that will impact Seattle Center planning. **Mayor Murray** opened the discussion by challenging the group to create a vision for Seattle Center that would build community, celebrate Seattle's cultural identity, and meet the changing needs of our diverse residents, while maintaining financially sustainable operations.



Seattle is a city in the midst of transformative change. People are moving here at record rates - last year alone we welcomed nearly 25,000 new residents. We have also become a global center for technology, aerospace, health, philanthropy, and the arts. Our businesses and institutions make meaningful investments in our community, create and sustain jobs, and attract new talent from all over the world. This is an important moment in the city's history and an opportunity to do something big at Seattle Center

Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools **Dr. Larry Nyland** joined the Mayor in welcoming input on a vision that would balance the needs and uses of School District property for a new high school and stadium with opportunities to create a great civic space on the campus. As Seattle's student population grows, more high school facilities will be needed, particularly in the Downtown area. School District plans development is just beginning, but the Memorial Stadium property in Seattle Center's northeast quadrant will be a pivotal site in future planning. Murray and Nyland pledged their commitment to working together on Seattle Center's and Seattle Public Schools' future.



Anish Kapoor's Cloud Gate at Millennium Park | image courtesy City of Chicago

Martha Choe, past Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation executive and Seattle City Councilmember, highlighted traits of great civic spaces around the world. From Chicago's Millennium Park to Paris' Luxembourg Gardens, these spaces shared key attributes:

- Inspire and enliven the human spirit
- Interesting architecture, landscaping, and design
- Engaging and activated spaces
- Democratic and inclusive community spaces
- Rich diversity of offerings
- Safe, accessible, accommodating, comfortable
- Well-maintained and sustainable
- Reflect unique culture or history
- Great public and private leadership

Looking at other great civic spaces emphasized the need to have new investments at Seattle Center focused on its core purpose: **to create exceptional events, experiences and environments that delight and inspire the human spirit to build stronger communities.**



As the city grows, Seattle Center's roles as a place for civic dialogue, a destination for visitors from around the world, a home for diverse cultural and civic institutions, and a resource for our whole region will become even more important. Seattle Center's reason for being is to enhance everyone's quality of life. It provides open space to gather and play. It provides a venue for community events from naturalization ceremonies to charity runs and walks. It is a home for experiences that touch our spirit and inspire our thinking. Investing in Seattle Center helps make Seattle a wonderful place to live for ourselves and for future generations.

Seattle Office for Civil Rights Director **Patricia Lally** emphasized the importance of engaging diverse communities and working to overcome racial and social disparities. Through the City of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative, issues of social equity have become an integral part of planning for all of Seattle's public institutions.

Though Seattle Center hosts a diverse range of activities, visitors, and programs, more work is needed to engage historically underrepresented communities. Working to eliminate race-based inequities is a critical part of creating a vibrant and sustainable Seattle Center. Developing a plan for the future of this public place will depend on effectively engaging communities of color and other underserved communities in project leadership, decision-making and dialogue.

Background Information

Attendees also heard presentations that provided vital background information ranging from district-wide school plans to an overview of Seattle Center programs, partners, and activity.

The subjects and presenters of these sessions were:

A Vibrant Hub: On Stage and Behind the Scenes at Seattle Center | John Merner and Alana Knaster

Design Principles: Century 21 Master Plan | Jill Crary

Getting Here: Transportation and Parking | Eric Tweit and Julia Levitt

Race and Social Justice Initiatives | Patricia Lally

Seattle Public Schools Planning | Flip Herndon

Uptown 2035: Urban Design Framework | Lyle Bicknell and Jim Holmes

Waterfront and Lake2Bay | Marshall Foster and Thatcher Bailey

What People Really Think: Seattle Center Public Opinion Poll | Jane Zalutsky

Materials from these presentations are available at

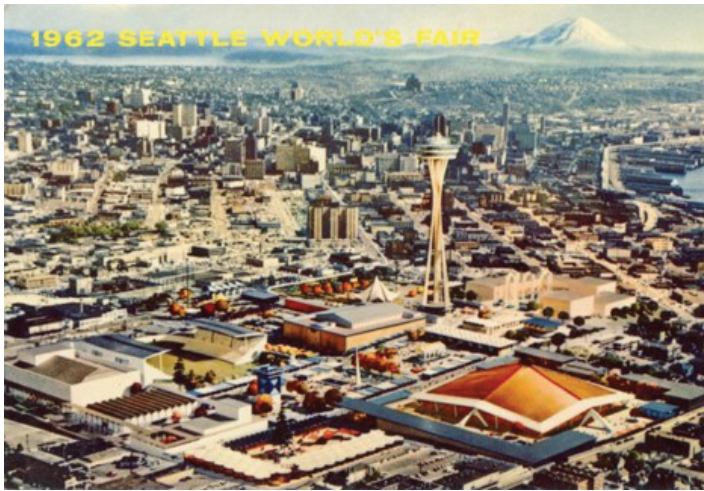
www.seattlecenter.com/whatsnext

See page 16 for detailed speaker info

Seattle Center 101

Armed with background information, participants prepared for a series of interactive exercises. Seattle Center Director **Robert Nellams** gave an overview of Seattle Center's inner workings both as a city department and a beloved civic asset.

Seattle Center was born out of a public and private commitment to a shared vision. From the creation of the Civic Center in 1928 to the 1962 World's Fair, businesses, civic organizations, and elected officials have partnered to create a great public place to gather, showcase art and culture, and enjoy rest, sports, and entertainment.



1962 Seattle World's Fair | image courtesy Seattle Center



Memorial Stadium opened in 1947, Memorial Wall was dedicated in 1951
image courtesy Seattle Public Schools Archives

More than 50 years after its founding as a city department, Seattle Center is still the heart of the city. Through all these years it has remained agile – evolving and adapting as our community has grown and changed. Experiences at Seattle Center continue to touch us individually, knit us together as a community, and help us share our collective humanity. Like New York's Central Park or Millennium Park in Chicago, Seattle Center could become an iconic part of our city's identity.

The campus is home to over 30 arts, culture, and science organizations, which host more than 12,000 events each year. These groups also provide thousands of hours of

education and outreach programs for students, seniors, and underserved communities throughout the city. Many of these organizations, among them some of Seattle's flagship arts institutions, would not exist without the facilities and services Seattle Center provides.

Seattle Center also partners with dozens of community-based cultural groups to produce programs like Festál. Through events drawing on the world's cultural traditions, these programs support and enhance cultural stewardship, innovation, and creativity in diverse neighborhoods throughout King County.



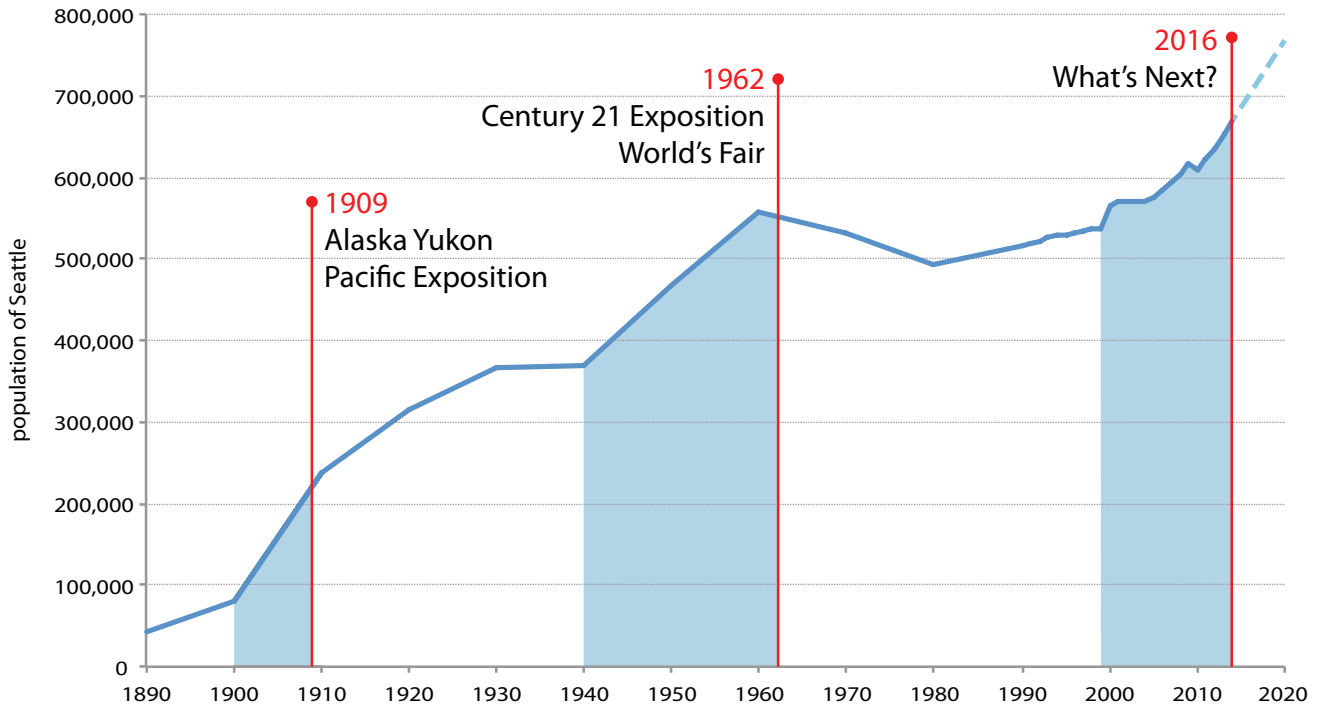
Festál: Spirit of Indigenous People | image courtesy Saddleburn Media

Public funding plays a fundamental role in Seattle Center's social, cultural, and economic impact. Each year, Seattle Center leverages about \$13 million public dollars to earn more than \$27 million from a variety of sources, including commercial activity, facility leases, parking, and Monorail revenue. This combination of public support and earned income allows Seattle Center to fulfill its varied roles as a steward of civic assets, a vibrant gathering place, a nonprofit partner, and an entertainment venue.

What's more, Seattle Center's activities, its nonprofit and business partners, and its visitors have a collective economic impact of more than \$1 billion annually. It directly and indirectly generates more than 15,000 jobs, \$400 million in wages, and \$40 million in tax revenue. It is an economic engine, an international destination, a cultural icon, and a valuable public asset.

Transformative change at Seattle Center will require balancing new capital investments and expanding public activity with the earned income and private investment needed to sustain operations into the future. Thoughtful development will help Seattle Center continue to generate social, cultural, and economic value for decades to come.

Seattle's Population 1890 - Present



Naturalization Ceremony for U.S. Citizens | image courtesy Jal Schrof

Investing in Civic Value

At certain moments in time, Seattleites have felt compelled to invest in civic and cultural infrastructure – to stock up the chest of civic value for the future. In each case, investment followed a long period of rapid population growth:

- **1909** The Alaska Yukon Pacific Exhibition, whose campus later became the University of Washington, was held after 20 years of rapid growth begun by the Gold Rush. Suddenly, Seattle had become a real city and not just a remote outpost.
- **1962** By the early 1960s, Seattle had become the center of the Jet Age. The World's Fair celebrated this new identity and catapulted the city onto the global stage. The huge investment in the Fair's buildings and grounds were intended to serve the growing city for decades.
- **2016** Today, more than 50 years after the World's Fair, we're in the midst of another boom. **What investment will we make now in our city's future?**

Our predecessors thought big and brought public and private investment together to benefit the people of Seattle. To take advantage of this new opportunity - participants were urged to think BIG and make meaningful investments in our shared values at Seattle Center.

Feedback: Viewpoints

Transformative change at Seattle Center is a huge undertaking. Participants were asked to consider several questions to identify key objectives, complexities, challenges, and opportunities. A number of common themes emerged:

What does vibrancy mean for Seattle Center?

Diversity of activities and visitors

- Mix of programming: quiet and loud, still and active, tourists and locals, old and young
- Accessible & welcoming for *everyone*
- Round-the-clock activity including restaurants and nightlife
- A place to 'be' not just 'do'

A magnetic destination

- A beautiful place - a must-see for visitors
- Safe, welcoming, accessible, and well-maintained
- Consistent aesthetic & brand identity

Strong partnerships

- Thriving organizations housed at Seattle Center
- Strong partnerships with groups and cultural organizations in diverse communities
- Connections to businesses and residents in the Uptown neighborhood



How do we know we're thinking big enough?

Innovation & transformation

- A concrete plan for a *big* investment
- Make Seattle on par with NY, Paris, LA, while keeping it 'authentically Seattle'
- Harness strength of arts, tech, and science in Seattle
- A vision that inspires and challenges us

Diversity & inclusion

- Engage diverse and overlooked communities
- Be sure everyone sees themselves in Seattle Center
- A welcoming Seattle Center identity

Relevance for the future

- Thinking beyond present-day limitations
- Build Seattle Center to serve future generations
- Balance "big" with sustainability





Top Opportunities?

Capitalize on near-term opportunities

- Available land in the northeast quadrant - more than 14 acres of developable space
- Opportunity for more open space in the heart of the campus
- Create the political will to get it done soon

Engage a Broader Constituency

- Include diverse communities in planning, especially historically underrepresented groups
- Engage youth to generate ideas, especially students
- Address race, social justice, equity and inclusion in planning efforts

Strengthening partnerships

- Build partnerships between Seattle Center and Seattle Public Schools
- Support and strengthen existing arts & culture organizations
- Develop support in non-profit and business communities so the plan can transcend politics

Seattle's prosperity

- New residents & visitors
- Economic & business growth
- Global reputation for excellence

Top Challenges?

Identify and Secure Funding

- Engage private funding partners - philanthropy, businesses, and the public
- Think differently about managing capital, operations, and governance issues

Addressing School District needs

- Plan for new Seattle high school and stadium to serve students from downtown and the surrounding area
- Build partnership between Seattle Center and Seattle Public Schools
- Connect Memorial Stadium with the rest of Seattle Center

Differentiate Seattle Center's brand

- Create a common narrative, brand, and identity for Seattle Center
- Align civic goals including Waterfront & HALA
- Create a common vision with Seattle Center resident organizations

Overcome Institutional Inertia

- Engage private sector leadership in Seattle Center planning
- Implement transformative change within a City department
- Create public will for action
- Maintaining access & vibrancy during transformation

Addressing Access

- 'Solve' parking for near and long-term
- Improve transit service to Seattle Center and assess future effects of Sound Transit 3 vote in November 2016.
- Connect Seattle Center with Lake2Bay and Waterfront plans.