



## Skate Park Advisory Committee

City of Seattle

Duty now for the future!

**To:** The Honorable David Della, Jan Drago and Richard Conlin  
Seattle City Council  
Parks, Education, Libraries and Labor Committee Members

**Cc:** Seattle Center Century 21 Committee Co-Chair, Jan Levy  
Seattle Center Century 21 Committee Co-Chair, Jeff Wright  
Seattle Center, John Merner

**From:** Skate Park Advisory Committee (SPAC)

**RE:** Input on Century 21 Committee Additional Proposed Replacement Sites  
for Seattle Center Skatepark

**Date:** 16 April 2007

On February 28, 2007 the Seattle Center provided the Seattle City Council Parks, Education, Libraries and Labor (PELL) Committee Chair David Della with it's response to the City Council's budget proviso regarding the Lot 2 skateboard park replacement project. This response identified and provided a preliminary analysis of three potential replacement sites on the Seattle Center campus. This site identification and analysis was conducted ahead of the planning process to be conducted by the Century 21 Committee in order to meet the March 1, 2007 budget proviso deadline identified by the City Council.

In a letter dated March 14, 2007 addressed to the PELL Committee, the Seattle Center Advisory Commission responded to the Seattle Center siting analysis, arguing that the replacement site selection should be folded into the Century 21 planning process. In subsequent verbal communication to the PELL Committee, the Century 21 Committee recommended an alternative proposed replacement site directly adjacent (i.e., North) of the Seattle Center Pavilion. The purpose of this letter is to provide the Skate Park Advisory Committee's (SPAC) analysis of this alternative proposed replacement.

Based on recent discussions with the PELL Committee members, the SPAC understands that the Century 21 Committee recommended site is located in the paved area surrounded to the south by the Seattle Center Pavilion (no longer actively in use), east by a restroom facility, and to the north by southeast entrance to the Key Arena. The Century 21 Committee has not provided their rationale for selection of this potential replacement site so the SPAC is unable to evaluate this site against their rationale. However, the SPAC is able to evaluate this potential site against our previously provided site selection parameters (points A-E) identified in our memorandum to the Seattle Center dated February 7, 2007 (Attachment A). Based on these parameters, the SPAC determined that the Broad Street Green East (Broad Street) site ranked significantly higher than the 1st

Avenue North Surface Parking Lot and Mercer Street Park sites identified by the Seattle Center. The remainder of this letter provides an analysis of the Seattle Center Pavilion (Pavilion) site according to our site selection parameters relative to the “Broad Street Green East” site.

A. Integration with other amenities

**Criteria:** Choose a location that is family friendly and integrates adjacent space (preferably green) for picnics and non-skater family member uses.

**Discussion:** The Pavilion site is nearly completely surrounded by directly adjacent structures. Although this site is integrated into the Seattle Center campus, these adjacent structures significantly segregate this space from the surrounding amenities and give the space a sense of isolation. During the SPAC’s 30-minute walk-through of this site on April 13, 2007, we did not encounter a single pedestrian at the site. Several pedestrians were identified on the walkway to the east but the orientation of the site and the restroom facility severely limits “eyes on the park” from this walkway. To accommodate the full square footage of the SeaSk8 site (i.e., 8,910 square feet), a skatepark at this site would likely require build out of the entire available space which would significantly limit incorporation of adjacent family friendly elements (e.g., green space, viewing areas, etc.) that could support spectators.

The isolated nature of this site and limited observation points would likely reduce family use and limit the user and non-user demographic at this site relative to the more open, green and picturesque Broad Street site. This decreased multi-generational use will decrease informal surveillance and self-policing of the skatepark and potentially lead to an increased frequency of inappropriate behavior. Both parks would equally well serve surrounding Seattle Center businesses given their integration into the central portion of the Seattle Center campus, except for the anticipated reduced family user base for the Pavillion site.

B. Provide “Eyes on the Park”

**Criteria:** Choose a location that is near pedestrian traffic and activity during the same hours that teen skaters want to use the facility – including evenings and weekends.

**Discussion:** This is an essential consideration for mitigating the difficulties associated with poorly sited skateparks. Constant pedestrian traffic increases the presence of responsible adult eyes on the park, which facilitates self-policing of the park. Experience from other projects in other locations establishes that “eyes on the park” and space for spectators drastically reduces the potential for inappropriate behavior within the park.

The Pavilion site is nearly completely surrounded by the Seattle Center Pavilion, the southeast corner of Key Arena, and a restrooms structure. The Seattle Center Pavilion is vacated (and likely slated for demolition) which eliminates current (and potentially future) pedestrian traffic to this facility. The East entrance/exit to the Key Arena is a secondary point of entrance/exit, which also limits pedestrian traffic to this area. In addition, any minor pedestrian traffic accessing the Key Arena from this location would

be limited to specific times and days and not be ongoing throughout the day. The restroom facility is accessed on the east side of the building, which further minimizes pedestrian traffic to the West side of the building adjacent to the proposed site. Pedestrians commonly use the walkway between the Seattle Center Pavilion and Fisher Pavilion but the orientation of the site and restroom facility limits “eyes on the park” from this walkway. Pedestrian traffic to this site during the nights would also be limited given the nature of the surrounding businesses and amenities. This minimized pedestrian viewing and enjoyment would increase the potential for undesirable behavior to occur unchecked by skatepark non-users and re-create the conditions formerly encountered at the original SeaSk8 location.

Alternatively, the Broad Street site is unique in providing naturally occurring activity and constant pedestrian traffic during the hours that skaters would be using the facility. The lack of above ground structures directly adjacent to this site also provides site lines across the site from multiple vantage points, including from the Space Needle and the overhead Monorail line. In addition, pedestrian traffic is much higher along this portion of the Seattle Center relative to the Pavilion site both during the day and night, which would decrease potential inappropriate behavior at this site during both skate and non-skate hours.

#### C. Use the Park to Draw Users to Other Uses on the Campus and Vice-versa

**Criteria:** Choose a location that encourages cross-usage between skaters and skaters’ families and non-skateboarding activities and businesses. Put the park near the parts of campus where you want families with kids. Let the skatepark provide the occasion for families to spend a much greater time using and enjoying the other amenities on campus. In turn, the proximity of kid friendly uses to the skatepark may draw new, youthful skaters and parents to the park, continuing the cycle of multi-generational use.

**Discussion:** Both the Pavilion and Broad Street sites provide nearly equivalent cross-usage given their central locations to surrounding Seattle Center attractions. However, as identified above, the isolated nature of the Pavilion site and lack of directly surrounding viewing areas (even following design of the skatepark due to space limitations) would likely decrease family use of a skatepark in this location thereby decreasing multi-generational use of the park. The Broad Street site provides a more welcoming open, green space environment which would like help parents feel more comfortable leaving their kids unattended at the skatepark for a limited time while they explore the immediately surrounding amenities (i.e., Space Needle and Experience Music Project).

#### D. Keep the Park out of the Center of the Center

**Criteria:** Choose a location that is on the edge of the campus and near mass transit to reduce the necessity of having kids skate the rest of the campus to get to the skatepark.

**Discussion:** The Pavilion site is more centrally located to the Seattle Center interior relative to the Broad Street site. In addition, the Broad Street site is located directly adjacent to the major regional bus stops located on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue whereas the 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue

bus stops serve a much smaller geographic area. Both of these differences would likely lead to increased skateboarding within the Seattle Center to access the Pavilion site.

#### E. Avoid Caging In the Park

**Criteria:** Choose a location that allows the skatepark to be integrated into the open space of the campus rather than placing it in a “cage” surrounded by “security” features.

**Discussion:** As discussed above, the Pavilion site is nearly entirely surrounded by directly adjacent structures. These structures create an artificial caging in of the site, decrease overall visibility of the site, decrease pedestrian traffic and provide a generally less welcoming environment for family usage. Alternatively, the Broad Street site is surrounded by open space which increases overall visibility of the site and encounters more frequent pedestrian traffic by campus patrons.

#### Comparative Evaluation Conclusions

Based on the above siting analysis, the SPAC recommends the Broad Street site over the Pavilion site for the following reasons:

- Increased multi-generational use of the skatepark.
- Increased eyes on the park throughout both skate and non-skate hours.
- Allows integration of surrounding open, green space and active and passive viewing areas.
- Surrounding open, green space is more welcoming.
- Minimizes skateboarding on other areas of the Seattle Center campus relative to the Pavilion site.
- Would not be affected by removal of adjacent structures (it is our understanding that the Seattle Center Pavilion may be removed in the near future).
- Provides a free public activity in an area of the campus that is currently populated by for-fee activities, creating a better overall synergy of activities and an incentive to patronize the for-fee amenities.
- Skatepark construction could be conducted concurrently with planned/budgeted retrofit of drainage issues.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these comments. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions or feedback on these important issues.

## **Attachment A**

**SPAC Recommended Siting Criteria  
SeaSk8 Replacement Site  
Letter Dated March 6, 2007**



## Skate Park Advisory Committee

City of Seattle

Duty now for the future!

**To:** Seattle City Council, John Merner - Seattle Center  
**From:** Skate Park Advisory Committee (SPAC)  
**RE:** Input on Proposed Replacement Sites for Seattle Center Skatepark/Seattle Center  
Response to Budget Proviso Regarding Lot 2 Skateboard Parks Replacement  
**Date:** 6 March 2007

The Skate Park Advisory Committee (SPAC) is writing to provide an analysis of Seattle Center's proposed replacement sites for the recently demolished Seattle Center Skatepark ("Seask8"), as described in Seattle Center's February 28, 2007 memorandum entitled "Response to Budget Proviso Regarding Lot 2 Skateboard Parks Replacement."

As a preliminary matter, the SPAC applauds the Seattle Center's efforts to identify and analyze the best possible replacement sites for the SeaSk8 facility. The February 28 memorandum clearly reflects a good-faith effort to identify potential replacement sites on the Seattle Center campus and apply appropriate preliminary siting evaluation criteria which balance potential replacement costs and benefits to the broader community.

While the SPAC considers all three proposed sites to be the product of a genuine effort to find the best possible sites on the Seattle Center Campus, it is our firm and unanimous opinion that the "Broad Street Green East" site stands head and shoulders above the 1st Avenue North Surface Parking Lot and Mercer Street Park sites. As explained in more detail below, the Broad Street site is unique in its ability to bring in a larger multigenerational, family based demographic to the Seattle Center, maximize favorable synergies with other Seattle Center amenities, and curtail past negative impacts associated with the original SeaSk8 site and design.

In support of this conclusion, we offer an analysis of the three proposed sites according to our previously provided site selection parameters (points A-E) identified in our memorandum dated February 7, 2007 as well as a discussion of the "site disadvantages" identified in the February 28 memorandum (point F).

### A. Integration with other amenities

**Criteria:** Choose a location that is family friendly and integrates adjacent space (preferably green) for picnics and non-skater family member uses.

**Discussion:** The Broad Street site is unique in offering a space that would appeal to a wider demographic of users and non-users, including entire families, other Seattle Center pedestrian passerby's and the skateboarding community. By providing immediately surrounding green

space, expansive views of the Space Needle, Science Fiction Museum, Experience Music Project, fun forest pavilion, fun forest amusement park, Frontier Gallery and the Pacific Science Center, and direct walkable access to other Seattle Center cultural and recreational attractions, this site would maximize the opportunity to bring in families and broader demographic of skateboarders. This increased multigenerational user and non-user base will increase informal surveillance and self-policing of the skatepark, as well as enhanced usage of other surrounding Seattle Center facilities.

In contrast the 1<sup>st</sup> avenue and Mercer Street have little to no integration with other amenities and are physically separated from the main Seattle Center campus. Given the lack of family friendly green space, and generally less hospitable feel of these areas, these sites would likely limit the user demographic to much the same group that had previously used SeaSk8, namely teens old enough to skate unsupervised. The Mercer street site is particularly problematic, as heavy traffic from Mercer and surrounding parking areas would render the area particularly family unfriendly. Both sites would need substantial investment in family friendly amenities to mitigate for the lack of user and non-user integration.

#### B. Provide “Eyes on the Park”

**Criteria:** Choose a location that is near pedestrian traffic and activity during the same hours that teen skaters want to use the facility – including evenings and weekends.

**Discussion:** This is an essential consideration for mitigating the difficulties associated with poorly sited skateparks. The Broad Street site is unique in providing naturally occurring activity and constant pedestrian traffic during the hours that skaters would be using the facility. This constant pedestrian traffic increases the presence of responsible adults “eyes on the park” which facilitates self-policing of the park. Experience from other projects in other locations establishes that this type of eyes on the park drastically reduces the potential for bad behavior within the park.

In contrast the 1<sup>st</sup> avenue and Mercer Street sites have comparatively little incidental pedestrian traffic and peripheral usage throughout the day, evenings and weekends. In essence, these sites would largely reproduce the original SeaSk8 site, where little regular pedestrian traffic passed by the park beyond periodic parking lot usage and during festivals. This lack of pedestrian traffic likely contributed to the site design including a fence surrounding the perimeter of the park to prevent usage during non-park hours. This “caging in” of the park further isolated the park from pedestrian viewing and enjoyment which increased the potential for bad behavior to occur unchecked by skatepark non-users. The 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. site is particularly problematic as it is surrounded on two sides by a parking garage, and sees very little ground-level adult foot traffic.

#### C. Use the Park to Draw Users to Other Uses on the Campus and Vice-versa

**Criteria:** Choose a location that encourages cross-usage between skaters and skaters’ families and non-skateboarding activities and businesses. Put the park near the parts of campus where you want families with kids. Let the skatepark provide the occasion for families to spend a much greater time using and enjoying the other amenities on campus. In turn, the proximity of kid friendly uses to the skatepark may draw new, youthful skaters and parents to the park, continuing the cycle of multi-generational use.

**Discussion:** If the skatepark is to serve as a tool for enhancing Seattle Center’s mission to serve all of Seattle, then it is essential to site it to maximize cross-over usage with other kid and family friendly on-campus attractions. The Broad Street site is unique among the three proposed locations in serving this essential purpose. Within visual range of the fun forest pavilion, fun forest amusement park, Science Fiction Museum, EMP, Frontier Gallery, and Pacific Science Center, and within a short distance from the Center House, Seattle Children’s Theatre, and the Children’s garden, this location provides a natural multi-use hub for families with children who enjoy skateboarding and rollerblading.

As addressed under point “A” above, the substantial physical isolation of the Mercer and 1<sup>st</sup> Ave sites, combined with substantial distances from family friendly on-campus attractions effectively precludes such cross-over enhancements of other non-skate attractions. The 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue site is visually and physically separated from the campus by the multi-story parking garage to the East, and a multi-story building to the north. Likewise, the Mercer Street site is cut off from the various attractions of the campus by six lanes of busy traffic, and only enjoys visual proximity with the proposed Theatre District, which would likely see very little cross-over use due to cost, programming and scheduling constraints. Isolated sites will mean that non-skater family members stay away, leading to single generational use and less multigenerational eyes on the park.

#### D. Keep the Park out of the Center of the Center

**Criteria:** Choose a location that is on the edge of the campus and near mass transit to reduce the necessity of having kids skate the rest of the campus to get to the skatepark.

**Discussion:** All three sites are either on the periphery of the campus or effectively off campus, and are located near mass transit lines.

#### E. Avoid Caging In the Park

**Criteria:** Choose a location that allows the skatepark to be integrated into the open space of the campus rather than placing it in a “cage” surrounded by “security” features.

**Discussion:** While this is largely a design and construction issue, site choice can have a substantial impact on this aspect. The proximity of substantial bus, tourist, and campus patron pedestrian traffic near the Broad Street site, and overall visibility from pedestrian level speaks highly for that location. In contrast, the parking structures and office buildings at the 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue site effectively serve to reproduce the same “walled in” and isolated feel of the original SeaSk8 site which significantly reduces user and non-user self-regulation of the park. Skatepark designs throughout the country have shown that integration of skateparks into high pedestrian traffic areas precludes the need to fence the park to minimize use during non-park hours.

#### F. Discussion of identified “Site Disadvantages”

**Loss of Green Space and Trees:** While this is largely a design issue, the SPAC strongly encourages not displacing the trees on the Broad Street site. Instead, the footprint of the replacement site could be elongated, extending to the west and southwest, leaving trees and surrounding green area as an amenity for families and spectators, as well as a natural buffer



between skate and non-skater users. We also strongly support the inclusion of “green” street-style elements – including planters and grassy areas in the skatepark itself (following the example of successful, cutting-edge “street plaza” skateparks in other cities, as identified in our memorandum dated February 19, 2007). Through careful site selection and design the impact on usable green space can be minimized.

**Potential Conflict of Use:** Potential conflicts with non-skater users can be minimized through the use of green barriers – including grass and planters – between the skatepark and non-skate areas, as well as the use of such passive hardscaping measures – such as cobblestones – in areas where skateboarding is not appropriate.

**Size:** The potential footprint of the skatepark can be quite fluid, especially if the design focus is on “street style” elements that will draw skaters off the rest of the Seattle Center campus. A good design can be shaped so as to accommodate an 8000 square foot skatepark at this site.

**High Visibility and Graffiti:** While this is again a design issue, the SPAC supports a “street-plaza” style facility that would lack the large vertical monolithic concrete surfaces that attract graffiti, and would render the entire park visible to pedestrian supervision. Experience with other skateparks reflects that, without a large “canvas” vandals are not attracted to skateparks, and that visibility prevents widespread graffiti issues.

**Loss of Sister City Flag Plaza:** While the SPAC is not familiar with this project, we do not consider it incompatible with the SeaSk8 replacement facility, in light of our support of a “street-plaza” style skatepark. Indeed, there could be substantial design overlap between the projects.

**Lack of On-Site Staff:** The SPAC recognizes and advocates that having a Seattle Center staff person assigned to youth activities and active programming at the replacement skatepark could help facilitate all of the above goals.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these comments. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions or feedback on this issue.