

May 3, 2021

MEMORANDUM

To: Public Assets & Native Communities Committee
From: Yolanda Ho, Analyst
Subject: Council Bill 120051: Seattle Center Campus Subarea Sign Code

On June 4, 2021, the Public Assets & Native Communities Committee (Committee) will receive a briefing, hold a public hearing, and possibly vote on [Council Bill \(CB\) 120051](#) that would establish regulations for signage in the Center Campus Subarea within the Seattle Center Sign Overlay district.

This memorandum (1) provides background of the legislation; (2) describes CB 120051; and (3) identifies next steps for the proposal.

Background

In 2019, the Council adopted [Ordinance \(ORD\) 125869](#) that amended the Land Use Code to establish the Seattle Center Sign Overlay District, allowing for sign regulations tailored to the specific needs of Seattle Center and anticipating major changes to the campus in response to Seattle Arena Company's (ArenaCo) plan to redevelop, lease, and operate the former KeyArena (renamed Climate Pledge Arena). Attachment 1 illustrates how the overlay district is divided into three subareas: the grounds around Climate Pledge Arena ("Arena Subarea"); the historic [Bressi Garage](#) and adjacent area ("Bressi Block Subarea"); and the remainder of the Seattle Center campus ("Center Campus Subarea").

ORD 125869 established sign regulations for the Arena Subarea and Bressi Block Subarea, but did not include regulations for the Center Campus Subarea, anticipating them at a future date. The overlay district supersedes the citywide [Sign Code](#), creating a set of regulations responsive to Seattle Center's unique physical environment and the role it serves as the City's civic cultural center that hosts numerous events throughout the year. For example, as compared to Sign Code provisions, the Seattle Center Sign Overlay District allows for larger signs and bigger video displays in the Arena Subarea, whereas in the Bressi Block Subarea, fewer signs are allowed in general.¹

In March, the Council adopted [ORD 126288](#) that amended the 2021 multipurpose limited tax general obligation (LTGO) bond ordinance to include \$8 million of financing for a Seattle Center signage improvement project. This project will improve signage on Seattle Center's campus, outside of the footprint leased by ArenaCo for Climate Pledge Arena and integrate signage on the campus with signage for Climate Pledge Arena. ArenaCo and Seattle Center have reached a tentative agreement on cost-sharing for this \$8 million project, with ArenaCo paying for 75

¹ For more information about the Seattle Center Sign Overlay District, see the [SDCI Director's Report](#).

percent of the project's debt service and Seattle Center paying for the remaining 25 percent. Seattle Center plans to cover its portion of the debt service by increasing sponsorship revenue through this project.

The signage improvement project² will involve replacing or upgrading existing signage and adding new electronic signs to: create a more consistent visual experience for the public; support sponsorship opportunities; and enhance wayfinding and information distribution across Seattle Center's grounds in preparation for the opening of Climate Pledge Arena currently scheduled for mid-October 2021.

CB 120051

CB 120051 would allow for the implementation of Seattle Center's signage improvement project as well as its long-term vision for campus signage, described in the [Century 21 Master Plan](#). The proposed legislation would amend the Land Use Code (Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) Title 23) to establish regulations for the Center Campus Subarea of the Seattle Center Sign Overlay District. Specifically, it would do the following:

- Codify past practice³ by granting the Director of the Seattle Center authority to manage signage on the interior of the Seattle Center campus in accordance with the proposed legislation, recently adopted [Seattle Center Sign Guidelines](#), landmark regulations (SMC Chapter 25.12), and technical code requirements;
- Establish regulations for event-related signage, such as balloons, posters, and banners;
- Create Center Campus Subarea sign provisions consistent with those for the Arena Subarea (see Attachment 2 for a comparison of sign provisions across the overlay district's three subareas in relation to citywide Sign Code provisions);
- Limit on-premises and sponsorship signs to City-owned or City-managed property and prohibit off-premises signs; and
- Adjust the Seattle Center Sign Overlay District boundary map to include the new Skate Plaza, the Seattle Center Monorail system, and a portion of Seattle Center-owned public space along Mercer Street, and shift the Northwest Rooms and Northwest Courtyards from the Arena Subarea to the Center Campus Subarea (Attachment 1).

The [Director's Report](#) states that Seattle Center and the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) engaged with a variety of stakeholder groups regarding the planned sign improvements, specifically the Seattle Center Advisory Commission, Uptown Land Use Review Committee, Arena Community Coordination Committee, Seattle Center Resident Directors, and the Seattle Design Commission. The groups provided positive feedback about the aesthetic

² For more information about the signage improvement project, see the [Central Staff memo](#) for the Finance & Housing Committee at its meeting on March 2, 2021.

³ The Director of the Seattle Center currently has broad authority to promulgate rules and regulations to support the "public use and enjoyment of the Seattle Center" (SMC 17.04.040).

improvements of the proposed signage, wayfinding enhancements, and increased ability to communicate to visitors about events and organizations.

Seattle Center and SDCI conducted an analysis of the proposal required by the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). On April 5, 2021, Seattle Center issued a SEPA checklist and a determination of non-significance (DNS) for the proposal. The City received five comments in response to the proposed changes – three supported the proposal, one provided technical suggestions and questions, and one was unrelated to the legislation. The 21-day appeal period expired on April 26, and the City received no appeals.

Next Steps

If the Committee votes to recommend adoption of CB 120051 on June 4, the City Council will likely consider the legislation at its June 14 meeting.

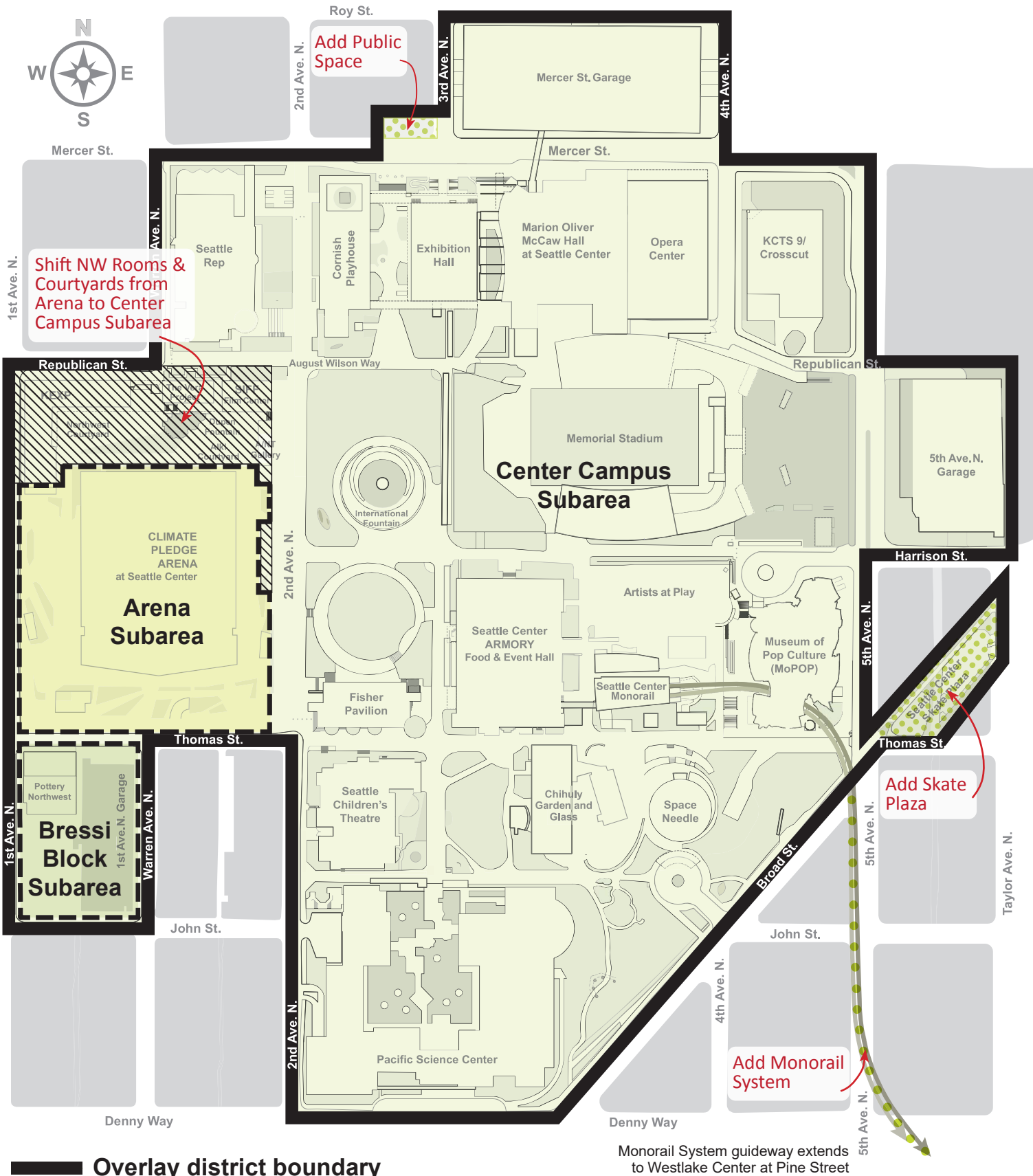
Attachments:

1. Seattle Center Sign Overlay District Map
2. Comparison of Seattle Center Sign Provisions

cc: Dan Eder, Interim Central Staff Director
Aly Pennucci, Policy and Budget Manager

Attachment 1: Seattle Center Sign Overlay District Map

Diagram below highlights proposed amendments to the adopted Seattle Center Sign Overlay District Map.



Shift NW Rooms & Courtyards from Arena to Center Campus Subarea

Add Public Space

Add Skate Plaza

Add Monorail System

- Overlay district boundary**
- Overlay subarea boundary**

Note: Overlay boundary lines include sidewalk/planting strips, exclude roadway.

Moved from Arena Subarea to Center Campus Subarea

Added to Center Campus Subarea

Monorail System guideway extends to Westlake Center at Pine Street

Attachment 2: Comparison of Seattle Center Sign Provisions

Comparison of Existing Citywide Sign Provisions, Arena Subarea, Bressi Block Subarea, and the Proposed Center Campus Subarea

In July 2019, Ordinance 125869 established the Seattle Center Sign Overlay District in Part 4 of SMC Chapter 23.55, comprised of the Center Campus Subarea, the Arena Subarea, which includes Climate Pledge Arena, and the Bressi Block Subarea. That legislation also established sign regulations for the Arena Subarea and the Bressi Block Subarea and anticipated the establishment of future sign regulations for the Center Campus Subarea. This legislation now proposes the sign provisions for the Center Campus Subarea. A sign overlay district is a mapped area with sign provisions tailored to the unique conditions of that area, in this case the Seattle Center (“SC”). The overlay includes provisions for types of signs and standards that differ from those that otherwise apply to the city as a whole. Sometimes sign code overlay requirements supersede a city-wide sign requirement, and sometimes they add more details that can be more permissive or more restrictive. This allows for tailoring of sign code requirements so they can be most responsive to the signage needs of a modernized Seattle Center and its cultural and entertainment venues and events while meeting the overall intent of sign policies and the City’s sign regulations.

Seattle Center’s management maintains authority to approve all signs on the campus and has published policy documents about Center signage, including the Seattle Center Corporate Sponsorship Guidelines, Seattle Center Century 21 Signage Guidelines, and the Seattle Center Perimeter Campus Readerboard Operating Guidelines.

The sign code for the Center Campus subarea varies in several ways from the otherwise applicable sign code requirements in Chapter 23.55 of the Land Use Code and from the Arena and Bressi Block Subareas. See the following table for a comparison of the main differences:

	Citywide Sign Code (Adopted)	Center Campus Subarea (Proposed)		Arena Subarea (Adopted)	Bressi Block Subarea (Adopted)
		W/in 20 ft of unvacated roadway	Greater than 20 ft from unvacated roadway		
Video and changing image sign details	<p>Video displays up to 1,000 sq in (approx. 7 sq ft)</p> <p>Video messages 2-5 seconds in length</p> <p>An alphanumeric sign as described in columns to the right would be limited to maximum 3 ft in length</p>	<p>Same as citywide provisions</p> <p>An alphanumeric moving-character sign is proposed to be allowed adjacent to street; length up to 42 ft, height up to 18 in and at least 8 ft above grade</p>	<p>Video display sign size per SC Signage Guidelines and SC rules and regulations</p> <p>Video messages 2-10 seconds in length; total not exceeding 20 seconds of every 2 minutes</p> <p>Not applicable. However, this alphanumeric sign would be allowed as a type of video display.</p>	<p>Video displays up to 150 sq ft, except may be larger displays on signs visible on or through a non-landmarked glass wall</p> <p>Video messages 2-10 seconds in length; total not exceeding 20 seconds of every 2 minutes</p> <p>An alphanumeric moving-character sign is allowed in the same manner as is proposed for the Center Campus subarea</p>	<p>Same as citywide provisions</p>
Brightness	Night-time limit of 500 nits (candela/m ²)	Same as citywide limit	Same as citywide limit	Same as citywide limit	Same as citywide limit
Number of signs allowed <i>(see notes regarding sign types)</i>	<p>Arena property Type A: 4 signs Type B: 39 signs</p> <p>NW Rooms Type A: 2 signs Type B: 19 signs</p> <p>Bressi Block Type A: 5 signs Type B: 42 signs</p>	Same as citywide provisions	Per CEN Signage Guidelines (pg. 7-8) and CEN rules and regulations	<p>Arena property Type A: 18 signs Type B: 18 signs</p> <p>NW Rooms Type A: 9 signs Type B: 9 signs (NW Rooms proposed to be moved into Center Campus Subarea)</p>	<p>Bressi Block Type A: 5 signs Type B: 5 signs</p>

	Citywide Sign Code (Adopted)	Center Campus Subarea (Proposed)		Arena Subarea (Adopted)	Bressi Block Subarea (Adopted)
		W/in 20 ft of unvacated roadway	Greater than 20 ft from unvacated roadway		
Sign types allowed	As indicated above, except 1 pole sign per each 300 linear feet can be substituted for a Type A sign. Temporary signs, with limits on types and durations	Same as citywide provisions Sponsorship signs are permitted on City-owned and City-managed property	Per CEN Signage Guidelines (pg. 15-20) and CEN rules and regulations A variety of types of event-related temporary signs are allowed, beyond citywide provisions Sponsorship signs are permitted on City-owned and City-managed property	Up to 12 pole signs are allowed (double-faced) A variety of types of event-related temporary signs are allowed, beyond citywide provisions Sponsorship signs are permitted on City-owned property	Same as citywide provisions No more than two sponsorship signs are permitted on City-owned property within the whole subarea
Maximum sizes of signs	Type A: sliding scale of 72-300 sq ft, depending on frontage width; 600 sq ft for business center signs Type B (wall): 672 sq ft	Same as citywide provisions	Per CEN Signage Guidelines (pg. 15-20) and CEN rules and regulations	Type A (except roof signs) have a sliding scale of 72-600 sq ft depending on frontage width Roof signs: 700 sq ft / sign Type B (wall): 672 sq ft except a sign visible on or through a non-landmarked glass wall may exceed that limit, up to 30% of the glass wall area Up to 200 sq ft for non-rigid signs	Same as citywide provisions

	Citywide Sign Code (Adopted)	Center Campus Subarea (Proposed)		Arena Subarea (Adopted)	Bressi Block Subarea (Adopted)
		W/in 20 ft of unvacated roadway	Greater than 20 ft from unvacated roadway		
Maximum height of signs	Type A: 65 ft or the zoned height limit, whichever is less for projecting or combo signs; 30 or 40 ft for pole signs; other limits on roof signs	Same as citywide provisions	Per CEN Signage Guidelines (pg. 15-20) and CEN rules and regulations	Similar to citywide rules, including wall signs allowed up to roof edge Roof signs on roofs above zoned height limit that provide screening are accommodated	Same as citywide maximums

Notes:

1. "Type A" signs include ground-related, roof, and projecting signs, and those with combinations of similar Type A features.
2. "Type B" signs include wall signs, awning signs, canopy signs, marquees, and signs under marquees.
3. Pole signs are a separate type that are neither Type A or B signs.
4. Sign calculations by linear foot allow one additional sign for the last increment of length.