

## FAQs

### ***Describe what went into the design of the building?***

The conceptualization of the building began with understanding the issues that underrepresented and marginalized students face at MSU and in their daily lives and then understanding their ideas surrounding multiculturalism and what it means to represent multiculturalism holistically.

After meeting with students, faculty, and alumni stakeholder groups, our design framework started to coalesce around the themes and ideas of:

- **Remembrance** - Remembering and honoring our collective histories and the histories of activism at MSU.
- **Sankofa** - This is an African proverb from the Akan people of Ghana that means “to go back and get.” One of the symbols for Sankofa depicts a mythical bird flying forward with its head turned backward. The egg in its mouth represents the “gems” or knowledge of the past upon which wisdom is based; it also signifies to the generation to come that would benefit from that wisdom. **To know where you are going, you must know from whence you came.**
- **Erasure** - The erasure of culture and history in our society
- **Intersection-[ality]** - Not only do we want to understand the physical paths that intersect, but we want to understand the intersectionality of the forces on people's lives that affect who they are and who they become.
- **Convergence** - To take the last idea a step further, we want this to be a place where people come together. The MCC will be a convener of people.
- **Transitioning** - This center will function as a “home away from” for many student. It will be a safe space, a breath of fresh air, so thresholds and transiting from one space to another, and how that is done, is critical.

### ***How does the design compliment/cater to the needs of what MSU is hoping to accomplish with the new MCC?***

The current Mosaic Center has provided a much needed and meaningful purpose but has yet to grow its existing space. The call for a new standalone Multicultural Center will meet many students, faculty, and alumni needs. The MCC will be a safe space for gathering and expression to honor and recognize underrepresented and marginalized students.

# SMITHGROUP

Additionally, cultural knowledge building and sharing will be a key focus that builds upon the universities education mission and commitment to creating an inclusive campus environment.

## ***What are some unique features?***

The goal of the MCC is to create an environment that is welcoming for students of MSU. We designed the building's eastern edge to project 45' outward, creating a protected entrance and a sheltered outdoor area that produces a warm and inviting entry experience.

MCC will house a variety of social spaces for gathering and communing. There will be public spaces like the Living Room, which is seen as the heart of the building. Here visitors will be able to meet, hang out, rest, and relax in an open and informal setting.

The Community Kitchen on the second floor will be an excellent space for people to gather. It will be able to host cultural events related to food with the potential for some light cooking. What better way to learn from, and engage with one another, than around food?

Below is a list of other spaces type and features:

- **Multipurpose Rooms** for events, meetings, and other activities. These spaces are designed to be adaptable to different types of events and activities. They will be available for use by different cultural groups, student organizations, and other members of the community here at MSU.
- A **Collaboration Space** on the second floor that can function as a library or information center with materials and resources about different cultures and ethnic groups.
- **Conference/Meeting Rooms**, of various sizes, for community groups and organizations to hold events and meetings.
- There will be a **Gallery Wall** for art exhibits to showcase the work of multicultural artists and artisans. These exhibits and displays would be designed to educate and inform visitors about the rich diversity of cultures represented on campus and in the surrounding community.
- Single and group Reflection Rooms for meditation or prayer room along with an Ablution Room.
- There will be a **Resource Center** that will include services such as counseling and advising, tutoring, and other support services. These services would be available to all members of the MSU community but would be particularly geared toward

# SMITHGROUP

helping students from underrepresented groups succeed academically and socially.

- **Outdoor Gathering spaces** both protected and in the open, along with an outdoor amphitheater that faces the river.
- The building also features a lightwell to bring more natural light.

## ***What will the building be able to function as?***

The building will be able to function as:

- A **community center**: A space for people of all ages and backgrounds to gather, socialize and participate in events and activities.
- A **cultural center**: A space for people to learn about and experience the cultures and traditions of different ethnic groups represented at MSU.
- A **resource center**: A space for people to access information, resources, and support related to mental, physical, and emotional well-being.
- A **meeting place**: A space for community organizations and groups to hold meetings, events, and workshops.
- A **language and education center**: A space for people to learn new languages and receive educational support.
- A **performing arts center**: A space for people to enjoy performances and events related to music, dance, theater, and other forms of cultural expression.

## ***What's going to make MSU's Multicultural Center stand out against other higher-ed institutions multicultural centers?***

### **Innovative Architecture and Design:**

One of the essential questions that we started to wrestle with was, how do you subtly represent multiple cultures within a unified context but in a symbolic manner? From there, the notion of us all being variations of the same started to emerge.

All of us are human beings, made of flesh and bone, and while our cultures may differ, our skin tones may differ, our body types may differ, we are all variations of the human condition, but never forget that we all share the same essence of what it means to be human. So, we are using the MSU shade of green to represent that humanity and varying its shades to symbolically represent multiculturalism here on campus.

The building has a unique and visually striking design that reflects the diversity of multiculturalism at MSU. The students asked for a building that is bold and unique. A place where they feel valued and represented. A place to see but not always be seen.

# SMITHGROUP

The building not only has a striking form, but it strives to blur the lines between interior and exterior, at certain moments, by creating protected, programmable outdoor space adjacent to the entry and multipurpose rooms.

## **Flexibility and adaptability:**

The public spaces (living room, multipurpose room, community kitchen, collaboration space) have a flexible layout and design that allows them to be easily reconfigured for various events and activities.

## **Inclusion and accessibility:**

The building and site are designed to be inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities, particularly the out environment. The amphitheater has tiered seating accessible at every level via paths and ramps. The interior finishes are designed to be warm and calm so that people with sensory issues do not feel overwhelmed, as an example for the interior environment.

## **Technology integration:**

The building will be designed to provide high-speed Wi-Fi for the interior and throughout the exterior site. Visitors can work or surf the internet outdoors while enjoying the weather within the amphitheater or while lying in hammocks that face the river.

Video conferencing and other digital tools will be incorporated to enhance the visitor experience.

## **Community engagement:**

The architecture is designed and planned in a manner that encourages community engagement. These spaces are front and center and invite people to come together.

***Lastly, this building has been designed specifically for the students and stakeholders of MSU. Without them, this building couldn't not, and would not exist!!***

## **MONTEIL CRAWLEY**

AIA, LEED AP  
Principal | Architect