

# PIONEER SQUARE REVITALIZATION PROJECT

## STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #4 – FEBRUARY 2, 2010

### Coach's Loft, Qwest Field, 800 Occidental Avenue South

### Meeting Summary

#### ATTENDEES

##### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dave Brunner, McCoy's Firehouse  
Tina Bueche, Synapse206  
Lisa Dixon, Pioneer Square Community Association  
Anne Fennessy, Cocker Fennessy  
Rick Friedhoff, Compass Housing Alliance  
Guy Godefroy, Trinity Nightclub  
Kate Joncas, Downtown Seattle Association  
Scott Matthews, Vulcan, Inc.  
Susan Ranf, Seattle Mariners  
Laine Ross, Resident  
Leslie Smith, Pioneer Square Community Association  
Annie Strain, Resident  
Richard Thurston, Grover/Thurston Gallery

##### OTHER ATTENDEES

Gillian Allen-White, Grand Central Bakery  
Don Blakeney  
Rob Brewster, Conover Bond  
Kevin Daniels, Nitze-Stagen  
Kati Davich, Downtown Seattle  
Association/Metropolitan Improvement District  
Karen Gamoran, Karen's Vintage Couture  
James Grindle  
Adam Hasson, Samis Land Company

Summer Hepburn, Grand Central Bakery  
Jan Johnson, Panama Hotel  
Jen Kelly, The New Pioneer Square blog  
Sean O'Meara, National Park Services, Klondike Gold  
Rush NHP  
Stanley Piha, Stanley Real Estate  
Scott Surdyke, Conover Bond

##### CITY STAFFING TEAM

Steve Johnson, Office of Economic Development  
Nancy Yamamoto, Office of Economic Development  
Captain Steve Brown, Police Department, West  
Precinct  
Gary Johnson, Department of Planning and  
Development  
Kerry Wade, Department of Neighborhoods  
Paul Elliott, SDOT  
Genna Nashem, Department of Neighborhoods,  
Pioneer Square Preservation Board  
David Yeaworth, Legislative Aide to Sally Clark

##### CONSULTANTS

Bonnie Berk, BERK & ASSOCIATES  
Allegra Calder, BERK & ASSOCIATES

#### INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

After self introduction, including many attendees who were new to the group, Nancy Yamamoto provided a quick update on recent news. Nancy told the group that she had received a call from Japanese production studio about doing some filming around Pioneer Square, and that Senator Cantwell had recently called a meeting to support small businesses. All of these activities are part of a confluence of factors to help support the Square.

Bonnie Berk reviewed the agenda and noted that the majority of the time would be spent discussing the first Draft of the Plan. Building the Plan will be an iterative process, beginning with today's conversation about Draft Plan 1.0. The Draft Plan is based on Donovan Rypkema's recommendations and Executive Summary from his site visit in December. It also incorporates the comments and questions from the Committee's two December meetings.

## **COMMITTEE DISCUSSION: DRAFT PLAN 1.0**

A summary of the Committee's discussion is presented below, organized by Goal area of the Draft Plan. Draft Plan goals are in *italics*, followed by a summary of the comments and discussion.

### **Goal #1: Increase Residential Density in Pioneer Square**

- *Encourage and advocate for greater residential development – Identify specific incentives needed to create more residential space in the neighborhood*

### **Committee Comments and Discussion**

- Focus on specific sites – if we wait on North lot nothing will happen
- Vacate Washington Street (behind Occidental there are two Diamond parking lots) to facilitate development of block owned by Greg Smith - expand the park out to allow housing
- Expedite development projects through City permitting process
- Lower barriers to development, focus on Seattle City Light – they are a big impediment to development in the Square
- Implement residential zoned parking
- Make alley vacations cheaper – undertake a demonstration project. Pioneer Square does not need any more alleys!
- Lobby to get Comcast down here – broadband is a challenge for businesses. The City needs to engage Comcast.
- Parking is a deterrent. Metro buses cordon off parking spaces and idle everywhere and the City is very aggressive about towing, especially on Jackson and Second. Towing is a big impediment to getting people down here.
- Residential development – we need to pay attention to where do we put it and think about how it works with the mixed-use character of the area. What are the responsibilities of property owners/developer with respect to setting expectations for new tenants/residents?
- Incentivize existing upper floors for residential. Can the current housing levy fund any improvements? Use tax breaks/assistance to get through City Hall processes.

## **Goal #2: Collect Data on Economic Activity, Reach Out to Businesses Identified**

- *Research and inventory the businesses and nonprofit organizations located above the ground floors; understand “who is in Pioneer Square” and accurately characterize the economy*
- *Inventory existing businesses, and identify missing complementary uses (cluster strategy)*
- *Meet with businesses individually and in groups to engage them, solicit their needs for business retention and expansion*
- *Reach out to large companies and institutions outside Pioneer Square, to obtain their support and engagement*

### **Committee Comments and Discussion**

- Develop a system to track business activity – openings/closings
- Experiment with getting information on new businesses from the business license database. The City could send out a notice when a new business license is received, as happens now with liquor licenses. Pioneer Square would be a manageable data set to test this idea.
- Address the different boundaries in the District.

## **Goal #3: Address Vacant, Dilapidated, and Underused Buildings**

- *Identify, inventory, and map neglected buildings*
- *Develop targeted strategies for each dilapidated, neglected building in the Square*
- *Engage property owners directly in efforts to improve the appearance, tenancy, and upkeep of the District*

### **Committee Comments and Discussion**

- The City should do a better job regarding neglected buildings – declare a site blighted and a nuisance and take action.
- Some buildings will sit vacant for decades, we may need to be prepared to enforce because many people are not engaged and are prepared to do nothing.
- It might be interesting to explore reinstating the “minimum maintenance ordinance”. Under this ordinance the City would do deferred maintenance work and bill the landlord. There is an existing agreement for this, but it was never funded.
- Use the building inventory done for the Livable South Downtown effort as a starting point.
- “Clean It or Lien It” is a program used in Baltimore. It’s not perfect if other barriers are in the way to development, but even small improvements can make a difference.
- There are a lot of things the City can do but pressure from peers may go a long way. How, as property owners and neighbors, can we put the pressure on?
- Portland allows food vendors on vacant lots – there might be some opportunities here in the Square to activate the Space. This would need City involvement.

- Vending like that needs to be tied to enforcement – it's done well in many cities so we know it's possible.
- The City is advancing legislation that would remove a lot of the barriers to this use.
- Diamond Parking is not interested in this use, so maybe we could use the street. (e.g. the parallel parking area on Main Street)
- Street food is a good entry into the restaurant world. This can help build on our base of fledgling businesses.
- Fixed businesses pay a lot of taxes, so it needs to be an even playing field. In some cases you need permission from adjacent businesses.
- Gary Johnson and Nancy Yamamoto will write up a summary of the current City vending situation for the Group.

#### **Goal #4: Public Safety and Civility**

- *Develop standards for social service agency responsibilities regarding clients outside their buildings and in the neighborhood*
- *Support a community center for Pioneer Square; a place for people to go during the day*

#### **Committee Comments and Discussion**

- Is there a committee/task force to finding/producing/raising funds for this place? How many agencies? How to collectively involve ourselves?
- The street scene is the detriment to Pioneer Square. People have spent three decades waiting for this population to gentrify out. It's a value that the neighborhood shares, but this population is a drain on resources and it's a reason people don't want to come here. We can try to help them build/make a service place. What about asking vacant owners to take on this population? Need something in it for both groups of people.
- Day centers are incredibly difficult and very expensive to operate. They are not in the City's budget. The center at Third and Virginia accommodates 300 people and operates 12 hours a day and costs \$600,000/year to operate. It is difficult to raise money to operate. You can't smoke inside, which is a problem for some people and perceptions about security are also a problem. Plus you need a big site of at least 15,000 sf with an indoor smoking area.
- Regulate or organize the people who hand out food to the homeless.
- Need to address the complete lack of rest rooms available for anyone.
- Drug dealers need to be dealt with.
- A memorandum of understanding (MOU) for night clubs is under development. The Good Neighbor Agreement is being rebranded.
- We can't rely 100% on the police to solve our problems.
- Noise is a problem, especially at night. Phone calls don't help and there is no enforcement. There is a sense of unneighborliness about it.

- That community is not going to change, so the question is how to better integrate it. The issue in the daytime is where can these people go? On drugs - at the line level cops arresting people is not the only or best solution.
- Non-social service people also have civility issues and this not only the people at night clubs. Some weekends of the year we are over-serving people and they are throwing up in the middle of the day.
- The problem homeless are probably a relatively small number of people and the officers know their names. Trinity is approaching the MID regarding retaining off-duty officers for security.
- Behaviors are a big piece of what we need to have enforcement authority for – we can't put them all in jail.
- We need community driven processes and political will to direct City resources and create civility bylaws and ordinances.
- Activating space is a good idea. We know that it works because people don't like to commit crime around other people. Move the people who live in very substandard housing to new low-income/SRO housing further south.
- The City should be on top of replacing burned out lights in the Square. Also, brighter lighting would be helpful. SDOT has approached us regarding the style of new lighting.
- I don't have a problem with any business acting in a way that is responsible to the context, but it's also about expecting responsible behavior from the individuals. We need to hold people responsible for their behavior.
- The transition time from 4-7pm, when the upper floor businesses change over is a problem.
- Public drug consumption is a problem – crack, heroin, etc. Fortson Square is a problem area.
- Motion sensor lights and sonic sensors deter drug dealing and other activities. The Fire Department has done a great job with sonic sensors in the alley behind its new building. Can we replicate those sensors in other alleys?
- The elephant in the room are the middle class suburbanites who get a pass. They bring money in so we let them overdrink, and enjoy the area. This group sets the stage for a lot of the activity.
- The objections to Pioneer Square I hear cited most often are violence, gangs, and drugs and NOT panhandlers, or transients. The street population in Pioneer Square is positively genteel – compared to other cities. The biggest problem is economic development – creating a suitable environment for business and for higher rent paying residents. Noise is the big issue and there is no enforcement. But we could solve this problem if the will exists.
- On the Pioneer Square blog and on Twitter the common theme is perception of safety due to the groups that stand around – homeless, drug dealers, the people who come for free food. These groups are off-putting and make people feel the area is unsafe.
- The City needs to get serious about mixed use, vibrant night life. Pitting stakeholders against each other is not useful. A liquor license is not an entitlement – there are responsibilities that go

along with it. As a gallery owner in the early 1990s my windows were broken, phone lines were ripped out etc. I agree that noise is a really big issue, especially from midnight to 2 am.

- As a new business I have not experienced any of this. I have lots of customers coming from the Eastside and Mercer Island. When I have asked people to move out of the storefront they have been courteous. Many people can't be held responsible; they are mentally ill, or war veterans.
- The Parks Department needs to be held accountable. Urban parks are different and they need to be managed differently. We need to activate the spaces.
- I'm trying to rent office space and female employees are not comfortable coming down here; this is a problem. I would like to get to things that are actionable now. We can't solve the social problems in the Square in the short term and we don't have much time to turn around the image.
- What tools can the City employ to help? Can you retrofit clubs to reduce noise? Can the housing levy money be used for something? As residents right now we tolerate behaviors that probably should not be tolerated.
- What is the level of responsibility that each organization with people using services inside should be held to – how do you deal with it? What is the responsibility once people are outside?
- What if the social service agencies collectively formed a group that could meet and take greater responsibility for clients "from the doors out."
- If Goal #4 is the hot button then it should become Goal #1.

#### **Goal #5: Marketing, Branding and Promotion**

- *Communicate the Square's architecture as "one of the great historic districts in America;" create materials and visuals to illustrate the point (quality, scale, and value of historic buildings)*
- *Communicate Seattle's cultural and historical heritage, through plaques, specialty walks, interpretation*
- *Build on the First Thursday Art Walk to attract more and new people to the Square*
- *Support the National Parks Services' Trails to Treasure program*
- *Support efforts to expand the Square's digital media and gaming cluster*

#### **Committee Comments and Discussion**

- We need to be visionary about what Pioneer Square can be. We need to connect it to other districts – the ID and the waterfront. Great cities are great walking cities. When the viaduct comes down, will Yesler be the gateway to the district? Is there a vision to get some of the people working down here to live here? We need to think about selling the future.
- I've been involved with PSCA for a while and this is the one area where they have been successful. This is the one area you get volunteers for because this is the fun stuff, but PSCA can't do much on the other goals.
- Need to bring young entrepreneurs to the area and we need incentives to bring them in. We need to allow building owners to lower rents or do something else.

- This goal is too limited in terms of diversity and richness of the fabric of the neighborhood. There is so much more here that needs to be included.
- We already have a lot of stuff here and we need to communicate that it already exists: 3 specialty walks, 3 museums, 100 plaques etc.
- When I think of historic Seattle, I also think of the ID, so there are probably some joint opportunities there. From a marketing perspective, we don't want people to not market themselves, but we need to think about what is the best way to change perception – to get people to try the neighborhood out.
- We had been working with a restaurateur who had a letter of agreement to take space in our building; they cancelled after the Elliott Bay announcement and decided to move to Pike and 12<sup>th</sup>.
- We are working with the owner of Deli to designate 12 vacant spaces for art, fashion and maybe architecture.
- Marketing and branding for the Square has been the architectural heritage. On an annual basis there are hundreds of thousands of dollars of investment brought in by galleries.
- Immediate fix – each year Pioneer Square, the ID and SoDo get half page ads in the Mariner magazine for free and they can have free tables in the concourse. We have shown videos before games for last 10 years as well. These offers are still out there.
- Support existing clusters we have – art, clubs, gaming, independent retailers. Build on what you have and protect it and then try to attract additional businesses.

#### **Goal #6: Organizational Development and Advocacy**

- *Establish organizational capacity, with adequate staff and funding, to execute this business-oriented economic development agenda.*
- *Address the mix of boundaries and overlaid zones – MID, BIA, PS Historic District, planning area, etc – identify and communicate the District's boundaries*

#### **Committee Comments and Discussion**

- There is an electronic map that shows the historic district, the urban village designation that still applies for certain programs, the BIA (a small group of businesses on the inside) and the MID overlays this. Plus, there is a boundary for the PDA for the ID/Pioneer Square. And the Livable South Downtown boundary overlay. It's confusing and part of the sustainability issue has to do with expectations about the neighborhood. It's a large neighborhood under some definitions, but the BIA has been paid for by a small group of business owners. For this planning purpose we need to be clear about what the boundary is. Whatever organization is charged with implementation will have an opportunity to relook at the boundaries of the BIA. Any new organization will need to prove its value to the neighborhood.
- For the last 14 years, the Mariners have provided small neighborhood grants. One of the things I hear is that many organizations don't have the resources needed to be sustainable.

- Two-way communication is important to any organization. We used to have forums for discussion at the Klondike Museum and those were really well attended and good venues for hearing ideas and what was on people's minds.
- Over the years the credibility of all of these organizations has really diminished. How we build credibility in the community has to be part of the work.
- In Pioneer Square there has never been any shortage of opportunities to provide input in to the Plan. We need authority and we need to implement. Back in the day, the BIA had some money and did accomplish some things. At some point, someone needs to make a decision.
- Many of the items we are talking about are economic development related. So it may not be right for the same groups that have done this work in the past to take on this work. The first focus should be on business revitalization. If it's too much to ask that organization to take on other issues, than how do we engage the City to take on some of these issues? Implementation is the key.

#### **Are there other people we should reach out to in this process?**

- M.A. Leonard from Enterprise
- Parks and Recreation
- Elected Officials Sharon Tomiko Santos and Eric Pettigrew
- WSDOT should hear this discussion (there is a Wednesday discussion that has started around traffic)

#### **CONCLUSION AND ROUNDTABLE REMARKS AND REFLECTIONS ON THE PROJECT**

- It would be nice to achieve some quick successes to energize our group. We could set up a goal to clean up our alleys.
- Development of a Gaming Association is underway. We are developing our website, and having our first meet up at the end of February. We are envisioning an open house of gaming companies where people can get autographs that coincides with Art Walk. There are more companies than we even first realized.
- It may be important for this group to hear from some service providers so that they can appreciate the complexities of their work. To activate the parks, we are doing the Fire Festival. The museum cluster is also important and should be included.
- Look at the DPD study, funded by the Mariners and done in 2006. The offer still stands for people to continue to use the resources we can provide. One of the things that concern us (the stadiums) is that some people view us as allies but others think we are the worst thing ever. We feel that we are part of three neighborhoods and we bring about 4 million people here. Sometimes they are welcomed and sometimes they are not.
- The best laws are the ones that you don't have to enforce. I would like some better civility legislation to create a higher expectation.



- There is a fascinating new history of Pioneer Square *Boren's Block One*, available at Wessel and Lieberman, written by a community member Sid Andrews.
- We should formalize the no games or special events on Art Walk Thursdays rule. We had a handshake agreement on this.
- Burlington Northern is another partner to engage around the graffiti at the station.
- Lots of things discussed – we are a small and mighty neighborhood but we can only do a small amount of things. Let's focus on the second floors and our position as the best historic district in the U.S.
- We had a design charrette on Saturday around the long-term vision for an interpretative trail through the Square: Trails to Treasure. We will put some information up on the PSCA website.
- Short-term goal – PSCA is planning another spring clean for this year and welcomes volunteers. The amount of park activation that will be happening this year is phenomenal. 8 week program, 7 days a week. The BIA also wants to use some resources to staff Pioneer Park.
- National Park Service hopes to have some of their staff roaming the neighborhood, available for questions etc. We hope to have a great presence outside.
- We've all agreed on what we don't want, but we have not agreed on what we want. Should we spend some time drafting a mission statement?
- If you have related materials, send things to OED and we can put them up on the website. Whatever we come up with here, we will have to get support from a wider group. The City Council has asked for a briefing on this work so we will be talking more about that soon.
- The City is collaborating with Todd Vogel on a competition for the alleys, called the Green Alleys Competition. We expect a lot of entries and the winners will be announced on the First Thursday in March.