



The City of Seattle

## Pioneer Square Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649  
Street Address: 600 4th Avenue, 4th Floor

PSB 39/26

### PIONEER SQUARE PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Time: 9:00 a.m.

#### Hybrid Meeting via Webex or Room L2-80 Boards and Commission

##### Board Members

Maureen Elenga, Chair, (ME)  
Montana Houston (MH)  
Sage Kim (SK)  
Katrina Plewinski (KP)  
Sean O'Brien (SO)  
Maya Spotted Bear (MSB)  
Jose Lorenzo Torres, Vice-Chair, (JLT)  
Catherine Walker (CW)  
Henry Watson (HW)

##### Staff

Genna Nashem (GN)  
Nelson Pesigan (NP)

##### Absent:

None

##### Key:

BM: Board Member

SM: Staff Member

AP: Applicant

Chair Maureen Elenga called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

#### **030426.1 ROLL CALL**

#### **030426.2 PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no in-person or virtual public comments.

**030426.3 MEETING MINUTES**

February 4, 2026

Approval of February 4, 2026, was deferred to the next meeting.

**030426.4 CERTIFICATES OF APPROVAL**

030426.41 King Street Station

303 S. Jackson St.

Applicant: Kate Fernandez, Office of Arts and Culture

Presenter: Alex Proba, Studio Proba

Proposed: Temporary art installation

Applicant Kate Fernandez, Downtown Activation Supervisor with the Office of Arts & Culture, provided background on the King Street Station Plaza, emphasizing its role as a major transit gateway and a key public gathering space connecting the Chinatown–International District, Pioneer Square, and multiple transit systems and highlighted the plaza’s ongoing cultural programming and its importance as activity increases citywide leading up to 2026, including anticipated World Cup–related events.

In this context, the Office of Arts and Culture saw an opportunity for temporary art installation that would help organize activity, create a welcoming environment, and offer a fresh experience in a familiar space.

AP Fernandez reviewed past successful installations on the site, the plaza’s high pedestrian use, and the need for accessibility, safety, and intuitive movement in any design and outlined the formal artist selection process, including outreach to roster artists, evaluation criteria, community panel review, and required reinvestment in local labor and materials.

AP Fernandez concluded by introducing the selected artist, saying Alex Proba’s, project *Clouds of Belonging* uses color and form to evoke shared experience and reflection, complementing the historic setting while inviting visitors to engage with the plaza in a new way.

Presenter Alex Proba, Studio Proba described *Clouds of Belonging* as an artwork designed to spark joy, curiosity, and a sense of shared experience, reflecting her broader practice of creating welcoming public spaces that offer brief moments of pause for people of all ages. Presenter Proba said the installation is positioned at a 45-degree angle on the plaza to maintain pedestrian flow through, ADA accessibility, preserve visibility of King Street Station, and allow continued use of the space for summer performances and operational needs.

Presenter Proba outlined the sculpture's dimensions approximately 33.5 feet long and 13 feet tall and noted that although it appears as multiple shapes, it is a single interconnected structure engineered for stability without penetrating the decking.

The internal steel framework, surface-mounted base plates concealed beneath existing gravel, and internal sand-filled ballast boxes ensure safety and wind resistance.

The exterior will be hand-carved high-density foam finished with durable exterior paint, selected for its suitability for temporary public art and ease of repair.

Presenter Proba reviewed the project timeline, with installation planned for late May through late September, and noted that any graffiti or minor damage can be quickly addressed by the local fabricator.

Presenter Proba clarified that the installation includes no lighting.

SM Nashem noted that the Board has previously approved temporary art installations on the King Street Station Plaza three times, consistent with the plaza's original design as a flexible space intended to support a variety of public activities.

SM Nashem outlined the standards that guide Board review of artwork, explaining

When the Board reviews art, free speech considerations need to be taken into account. Board review of art should primarily be guided by the Secretary of Interior Standards in terms of how the art physically impacts a building or site i.e. if it is attached to the building or interacts with a building, it should not cause harm – installation should not damage historic materials and installation should not cover or obscure architectural features, etc. Similar to other amenities in the public right of way or open spaces, the artwork should be durable, safe and not create any security issues or obstruct pedestrian flow. That the colors of the art are generally compatible with the history and character of the site/building and District. Board members should not consider if they personally like the style, quality, or theme of the art.

Chair Maureen Elenga asked whether the material and scale of the proposed sculpture might encourage people to climb on it, noting that its height could create a safety risk if someone attempted to climb and fall.

Presenter Proba responded that her past installations including sculptures up to 20 feet tall have not resulted in climbing issues and explained that the

proposed sculpture's smooth, rounded surfaces are not conducive to climbing and are intentionally designed to discourage it.

BM Catherine Walker stated that while she personally found the artwork impressive, her role requires evaluating the proposal strictly through the lens of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the governing code, not personal preference and expressed concern that the artwork's materials, vivid colors, and overall massing appeared inconsistent with the historic character of the district and questioned why this installation was proposed for this specific location rather than a non-historic site.

BM Walker noted that the sculpture's size and angled placement seemed to interrupt important sightlines and spatial relationships between the historic station and surrounding streets, which are key considerations under Standards No. 9 and Preservation Brief 17(Architectural Character: Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their Character) and also questioned whether the artist selection process included review of these standards, observing that the proposal materials did not address how the artwork aligns with or responds to the historic district's requirements.

BM Walker reiterated her appreciation for the artwork itself, she did not believe it was appropriate for installation within the National Historic District.

Vice-Chair José Lorenzo Torres agreed with the importance of ensuring that artist selection processes across city institutions incorporate the specific preservation guidelines applicable to each historic district and noted that doing so would help align proposals with established standards from the outset.

Vice-Chair Torres acknowledged the plaza's contemporary interventions and the inherently flexible, modern design of the space itself and stated that while the artwork is visually contemporary and does impact the historic setting, its temporary nature distinguishes it from a permanent installation, which would merit a different level of scrutiny.

BM Katrina Plewinski suggested exploring whether the surrounding landscape planting could be visually integrated with the temporary installation to reduce the contrast between the artwork's bright colors and the historic setting.

Board member Sage Kim noted that the Board has recently reviewed other art and signage proposals for the same plaza and asked how these overlapping installations are being coordinated.

AP Fernandez explained that she is overseeing all projects occurring in the plaza and is coordinating their timing and placement to avoid conflicts and noted that the approved “ART sculpture” sign installation and the proposed *Cloud of Belonging* sculpture are well separated, with approximately 15 meters and a series of planters between them—including the cherry tree display creating a natural visual and spatial buffer.

AP Fernandez stated that the two elements are compatible in scale and tone, with the lower-profile sign positioned closer to the sidewalk and the taller artwork set deeper into the plaza, creating a gradual rise in visual elements leading toward the historic building and added that this arrangement maintains clear sightlines to the building’s neon identifier sign at the top of King Street Station.

Board Member Maya Spotted Bear requested a rendering that shows all installations within the plaza and shared that she was initially excited by the artwork, noting that its organic shapes and bright colors resonated with Native floral design traditions from her community.

BM Walker stated that she thought that Native history did not count in this situation because it was outside the period of significance of the National Register Historic District.

BM Spotted Bear noted that the Native community was there during that period and doing art but were not allowed to be recognized. SM Nashem reminded the Board that although the plaza lies within a National Register district, its review authority comes from the local preservation ordinance, which does not define a specific period of significance. As a result, the Board may also consider historical context both before and after the era defined in the Skid Row Pioneer Square National Register District including history as the period of significance and history that is not reflected in the district’s architecture presently.

SM Nashem explained that compatibility can be interpreted across a wide range, and that the Board has historically required some shared qualities without demanding replication of historic forms and encouraged the board to consider how other artworks in the district have been evaluated, noting that unlike architecture, it is little comparison for public art.

SM Nashem suggested that future guideline development may help clarify expectations for temporary art but offered this broader context to support the Board’s deliberation.

BM Henry Watson acknowledged BM Walker’s concerns but emphasized the importance of recognizing the plaza as part of an arts district and one of the

few places within the neighborhood where temporary artistic interventions can occur and noted that while the materiality and bright colors may differ from the historic palette, the installation's temporary nature is a significant factor and allows room for contemporary expression without permanent impact.

Board members offered a range of perspectives on the proposal. BM Walker but stated that its materials, vivid colors, and massing appeared incompatible with the historic district and disrupted important sightlines, leading her to question its appropriateness for this location under the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

Vice-Chair Torres agreed that selection processes should better incorporate district guidelines but noted the plaza's history of contemporary interventions and emphasized the significance of the installation's temporary, reversible nature, which he felt allowed room for contemporary expression without permanent impact.

BM Plewinski suggested exploring whether surrounding landscaping could help visually integrate the artwork's bright colors with the historic setting.

BM Kim raised concerns about coordination among multiple recent proposals for the same plaza and asked how overlapping installations and their display periods are managed.

BM Spotted Bear shared that the artwork's organic shapes and bright colors resonated with longstanding Native floral design traditions, offering a cultural lens that supports its presence in the district.

BM Watson emphasized the plaza's role within an arts district and noted that temporary installations provide rare opportunities for contemporary artistic expression, contributing positively to the area's cultural vibrancy despite their contrast with historic materials.

Chair Elenga concluded by acknowledging the range of perspectives shared and emphasizing the Board's responsibility to balance preservation standards with the realities of a contemporary, active public plaza and noted the importance of considering both the temporary nature of the installation and its potential visual impact on the historic setting.

Action:

BM Sage Kim move to recommend granting a Certificate of Approval for installation of temporary artwork located on the reconstructed Jackson

Street Plaza. The artwork is not attached to the building. All per the applicant's submittal.

The Board directs staff to prepare a written recommendation of approval based on considering the application submittal and Board discussion at the March 4, 2026 public meeting and forward this written recommendation to the Department of Neighborhoods Director.

**Code Citations:**

**Seattle Municipal Code**

23.66.030 Certificates of Approval required

Certificate of approval required. No person shall alter, demolish, construct, reconstruct, restore, remodel, make any visible change to the exterior appearance of any structure, or to the public rights-of-way or other public spaces in a special review district, and no one shall remove or substantially alter any existing sign or erect or place any new sign or change the principal use of any building, or any portion of a building, structure or lot in a special review district, and no permit for such activity shall be issued unless a certificate of approval has been issued by the Department of Neighborhoods Director.

**Rules for the Pioneer Square Preservation District**

III. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR REHABILITATION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

Rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

**Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation**

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

MM/SC/SK/MH

7:1:1

The motion passed. BM Catherine Walker voted against the motion, and BM Sean O'Brien abstained.

**030426.5 BRIEFING**

There were no briefings.

**030426.6 BOARD BUSINESS**

**030426.7 REPORT OF THE CHAIR**

**030426.8 STAFF REPORT**

SM Nashem reported on recent administrative approvals since the last meeting and noted approval for repainting the wood storefront elements and installing signage for a new business, The Outpost, at the Washington Two Building at 157 South Jackson Street.

SM Nashem also reported approval of new signage for the daycare at the Metropole Building. In addition, revisions were approved for a previously issued Certificate of Approval for 800 Occidental Avenue, involving changes to the north lot storage structure, including replacing gate-style garage doors with roll-down screen doors, adding fencing, and modifying the stamped-asphalt brick-pattern circle to plain concrete to better withstand heavy equipment traffic.

Meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.