



The City of Seattle

## Pioneer Square Preservation Board

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PSB 53/26

### PIONEER SQUARE PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, March 18, 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)  
Jose Lorenzo Torres, Vice-Chair, (JLT)  
Catherine Walker (CW)  
Henry Watson (HW)

##### Staff

Genna Nashem (GN)  
Nelson Pesigan (NP)  
Sarah Sodt (SS)

##### Absent:

Maya Spotted Bear (MSB)

##### Key:

BM: Board Member

SM: Staff Member

AP: Applicant

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

#### **031826.1 ROLL CALL**

#### **031826.2 PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Bobby Nickel, Public Affairs Manager for Visit Seattle, expressed strong support for the proposed public restrooms in Pioneer Square and emphasized Visit Seattle's role in bringing roughly 40 million visitors to the

region each year, including an estimated 750,000 visitors and residents expected to participate in World Cup activities this summer.

Nickel noted that the shortage of public restrooms affects both visitors and residents, limiting people's ability to spend time affordably in neighborhoods like Pioneer Square.

Isaac Patterson, Tharsis Law, representing Cedarstrand Rentals, urged the board either to deny the Certificate of Approval for the proposed public right-of-way restrooms or to require SDOT to return with a design that meets district guidelines and emphasized that the core question is whether the proposed units support the historic character of the Pioneer Square Preservation District, which is defined by materials such as brick, sandstone, and painted wood signage.

Isaac Patterson cautioned that any approval now would effectively set a precedent for future approval and reiterated that urgency related to the World Cup cannot override the requirement to meet established guidelines.

Mr. Patterson also gave verbal comments on March 11 and Feb 25, 2026. He submitted public comment as well on behalf of Ken Cederstrand including, Lisa Bonifant, and Jeremy Eckert.

Gary Szeredy owner of the Hall across the street from one of the proposed sites made verbal public comment supporting the project and explaining the need for the restroom he sees in the area, that his restaurant can't accommodate on March 11, 2026.

Andy Randles made verbal comments supporting the project on March 11, 2026

Tija Petrovich, on behalf of the Residents Council, submitted written comments supporting the project.

Judith Rinehart, owner of Reinhart Gallery submitted written comments supporting the project.

Anahi Bendeck from the Alliance for Pioneer Square submitted written comments supporting the project.

Circle the Square, a Pioneer Square neighborhood Group submitted written comments supporting the project.

Lissa Kramer, Klondike Gold Rush National Park submitted written comments supporting the project, and highlighted that they would not be able to meet

the needs of FIFA crowds with their public bathroom. She also gave verbal comment at the ARC March 11, 2026 meeting.

Nicolas Simpson of Bumgardner, made verbal comments at the March 11, 2026 meeting.

Fiona Cahill, Emily Darling, and Jacqui Aiello of SMR Architects submitted written comments that they support the project.

Drew Johnston, Seattle Seahawks submitted written comments supporting the project including Zach Hensley and Sheryl Whitney.

### **031826.3 MEETING MINUTES**

February 4, 2026 MM/SC/CW/HW

6:0:2

The motion passed and was approved. Board members Katrina Plewinski and Montana Houston abstained.

### **031826.4 CERTIFICATES OF APPROVAL**

031826.41 Public Bathrooms in the Public Right of Way

1<sup>st</sup> Ave (1<sup>st</sup> Ave S and S Charles St) and 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave (2<sup>nd</sup> and Washington St)

Presenter(s): Lauren Corn, SDOT; Joel Miller, SDOT

Joel Miller, Public Space Manager for the Seattle Department of Transportation, introduced the proposal by explaining SDOT's expanded role in downtown activation efforts as the city prepares for the World Cup and long-term post-pandemic recovery and emphasized that public restrooms have been a consistent community request and described how SDOT, in partnership with King County Metro, Sound Transit, and Pierce Transit, identified *Throne* smart restrooms as a viable solution because they provide running water, accessibility features, and remote monitoring without requiring plumbing.

Joel Miller highlighted that the units are modular, quickly deployable, and suitable for a one-year pilot funded through the 2026 levy, allowing SDOT to test locations, adjust operations, and move units as needed and also summarized the extensive outreach conducted with the Alliance for Pioneer Square, local businesses, landowners, and federal partners, underscoring that the project reflects a collaborative effort to meet a long-standing public space need ahead of major summer events.

Presenter Lauren Corn presented two proposed sites for public restroom installations, (1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South and South Charles Street) and (2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South and South Washington Street) each featuring two units sharing a single

platform and ramp to minimize footprint and visual impact and outlined five primary site selection criteria: location within the right-of-way, accessibility for a 30-foot maintenance vehicle, high solar exposure for solar-powered operation, placement in areas lacking existing restroom access, and ADA-compliant sidewalks with queuing space. Additional considerations included avoiding interference with sidewalks, drains, utility covers, and adjacent businesses, ensuring structural support, and proximity to electrical poles for winter backup power.

Presenter Corn presented three wrap options, using imagery and a color palette reflecting the neighborhood's Romanesque Revival architecture and late Victorian aesthetic. The designs feature Pioneer Park, an architectural detail of the Pergola (a nod to historic underground restrooms), and City Hall Park's trees. The background color of the bathrooms was changed from white to green as the ARC had requested. The board was asked to approve one of the three options.

Chair Maureen Elenga acknowledged the broad public support for the proposed restrooms but highlighted the concerns raised by Mr. Patterson regarding material compatibility and historic character and emphasized that while the district's guidelines address materiality and compatibility, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards also guide the board's decisions. She said that this is a reversible installation.

Chair Elenga noted that the proposed units function more like other approved public amenities such as aluminum and plastic waste and recycling receptacles with custom wraps rather than buildings that alter the historic fabric and stressed the board's dual responsibility to protect historic character while also supporting the neighborhood's viability, observing that basic human needs, including waste disposal, require practical infrastructure.

Vice Chair José Lorenzo Torres expressed support for the Chair Elenga's perspective, noting that while the restroom materials may not fully align with traditional district standards for a building, the improvements made to the proposed designs are consistent with other enhancements the board has previously approved and acknowledged the temporary nature of the installation and the clear public benefit justify moving forward.

BM Catherine Walker thanked Mr. Patterson for his detailed letter and noted that his points raise important principles the board should always keep in mind and explained that the municipal code section he cited explicitly allows the Department of Neighborhoods Director after board review and recommendation to approve alternative materials, meaning the board has discretion to support materials that do not strictly meet standard criteria.

BM Walker stated that, given the strong community support, the project history, and the public need, there are compelling reasons to recommend approval of this application, with stipulations.

Chair Elenga asked SDOT to clarify how access to the proposed restrooms would work for individuals without smartphones, particularly members of the unhoused community.

Presenter Joel Miller explained that the tap-card system is intended specifically to ensure access for people who do not have smartphones and acknowledged that a formal distribution plan is not yet in place but stated that developing this plan, working with service providers to ensure equitable access, would be SDOT's next step if the project moves forward.

BM Montana Houston echoed the importance of ensuring equitable access to the restrooms is essential to the project's success. Houston also raised questions about the proposed exterior wrap, referencing concerns in the staff report about the use of toilet-icon imagery.

Presenter Miller explained that the large toilet icon on the exterior wrap is intentional and essential for clear public identification and noted that other cities using *Throne* units without custom wraps rely on a similar prominent symbol, and that Seattle's custom designs still require a universally recognizable marker so people can quickly understand the unit's purpose from a distance and added that *Throne* selected this icon because it works across languages and cultural contexts and avoids gendered restroom symbols, supporting broader accessibility.

BM Walker asked whether SDOT had coordinated the restroom proposal with other ongoing right-of-way projects in the district, such as bike corrals, to ensure there are no conflicts in space or placement and also inquired whether the exterior wrap colors must be identical at both proposed locations First & Charles and Second & Washington or whether each site could have a different design to better reflect the specific context.

Presenter Miller explained that SDOT has coordinated the restroom proposal with other ongoing right-of-way projects, including bike corrals and the Occidental Promenade project, to avoid conflicts and ensure compatibility and noted that the mobility of the units provides future flexibility, including the possibility of relocating a unit to the Promenade once that project advances.

Regarding exterior wraps, Presenter Miller stated that *Throne* currently requires all units to use the same design. Because the wrap is

custom-produced for Seattle, *Throne* needs a single standardized version to ensure quick replacement if panels are damaged.

BM Sage Kim commented that the choice of green, foliage-based image of City Hall park was appropriate because it allows the restroom units to blend more naturally into various contexts throughout Pioneer Square and expressed support for using a consistent green wrap at all locations, noting the green background was recommended at the previous meeting. The applicant noted the color was inspired by existing painted wood windows and was from the Victorian and Romanesque color palette presented.

Board members thought the background green was compatible with the district. The Board understood the graffiti prevention strategy for including a graphic. Most Board members expressed a clear favor of Wrap Option 3. Board members, noted that the image maintains clearer visibility of the restroom icon without overwhelming the background graphics, had the best composition and provided a more neutral, generic appearance adaptable across locations in the district.

Board members discussed potential stipulations to accompany approval of the restroom pilot, focusing on oversight, flexibility, and equitable access.

BM Walker proposed SDOT should return to the board for a progress review after approximately four months of installation, timed to capture World Cup activity and to include a condition allowing the board to request relocation of units if significant problems arise or community consensus indicates the siting is not working.

Chair Elenga and BM O'Brien supported a progress report in 4 months after launch, and the board agreed that if the pilot extends beyond one year, SDOT must return at least three months in advance for further review.

BM Houston endorsed these stipulations and added that SDOT should provide a detailed plan for distributing tap cards, with particular attention to ensuring access for unhoused and other underserved populations.

Action:

BM Catherine Walker moved to recommend granting a Certificate of Approval for installation of public bathrooms (2 per location) in the public right of way as shown on the site plan for one year as a pilot program All per the applicant's submittal.

- *The wrap will be image number three all per the applicant's most recent submittal.*
- *The applicant will report back to the board no later than four months from launch of the restrooms with the report to include data on the distribution and utilization of the tap cards.*
- *If bathroom facilities are considered for a long term installation beyond the pilot, the applicant must begin discussions with the board with adequate time to explore data and feedback from the pilot, potential improvements and potential design improvements, but NO less than three months in advance of a desired extension or replacement.*

The Board directs staff to prepare a written recommendation of approval based on considering the application submittal and Board discussion at the March 18, 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

A. 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.

**23.66.100 Creation of district, legislative findings and purpose**

A. During the City of Seattle's relatively brief history, it has had little time in which to develop areas of consistent historical or architectural character. It is recognized that the Pioneer Square area of Seattle contains many of these rare attributes and consequently is an area of great historical and cultural significance. Further, the regional sports stadiums, constructed in and near the Pioneer Square area, and the traffic and activities that they generate have resulted in adverse impacts upon the social, cultural, historic and ethnic values of the Pioneer Square area. To preserve, protect, and enhance the historic character of the Pioneer Square area and the buildings therein; to return unproductive structures to useful purposes; to attract visitors to the City; to avoid a proliferation of vehicular parking and vehicular-oriented uses;

to provide regulations for existing on-street and off-street parking; to stabilize existing housing, and encourage a variety of new and rehabilitated housing types for all income groups; to encourage the use of transportation modes other than the private automobile; to protect existing commercial vehicle access; to improve visual and urban relationships between existing and future buildings and structures, parking spaces and public improvements within the area; and to encourage pedestrian uses, there is established as a special review district, the Pioneer Square Preservation District. The boundaries of the District are shown on Map A for 23.66.100<sup>1</sup> and on the Official Land Use Map.

### **Rules for the Pioneer Square Preservation District**

#### **XI. STREET FURNITURE**

The cast iron and wood benches located in Pioneer Place Park and Occidental Park are the standard for the District. Approval to install benches will be determined by need and availability. All other elements of street furniture will be reviewed by the Board as to their specific compatibility within the Preservation District. This review will be extended to all bus shelters, bollards, signal boxes, mailboxes, pay phones, trash receptacles, newspaper stands, and vending carts which are both permanent and mobile. Pay phones, mail boxes, trash receptacles, and newspaper stands shall be located in the sidewalk zone adjacent to the curb, in line with street trees and light standards to reduce impediments to pedestrian flow and to avoid obscuring visibility into street level retail storefronts. (7/99, 7/03)

#### **Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation**

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

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall 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/CW/SK

8:0:0

The motion passed and was approved unanimously.

031826.42 Buttnick Building  
200 1<sup>st</sup> Ave S  
Applicant: Terry Podgorski

*BM O'Brien informed the board that he is abstaining from the discussion.*

AP Terry Podgorski, representing Ripple Productions, explained that the organization is returning to Pioneer Square after previously operating Café Nordo and has signed the first new lease in the recently purchased Buttnick Building.

Ripple is developing a 20,000-square-foot immersive arts venue called Nebula, involving 30–40 artists and combining performance, interactive installations, and historic storytelling. Applicant Podgorski described the proposed temporary mural for the building's plywood-covered glass extension facing Occidental Square, noting that the plywood has been a persistent target for graffiti and that the mural is intended both to signal the building's reactivation and to contribute positively to the streetscape.

AP Podgorski outlined the location and dimensions of the mural area and shared that the plywood is expected to remain for six to eight months while the organization works with the property owner on securing and eventually restoring the glass. The mural concept, created by local artist Craig Conduff—known for major public artworks—draws inspiration from Pioneer Square's early shoreline history and is designed to evoke curiosity about the forthcoming arts facility.

AP Podgorski emphasized that the artwork serves as a welcoming message to the neighborhood and a preview of Ripple's commitment to bringing arts and activity back into space.

AP Podgorski explained that the mural will be protected with a coating designed to allow graffiti to be removed more easily, and that artist Craig Conduff has committed to providing touch-ups as part of the project if any damage occurs and added that Conduff is well connected within the local arts community and has already engaged with individuals responsible for past tagging, which may help reduce future incidents.

Action:

BM Walker moved to recommend granting a Certificate of Approval for installation of a mural on existing security coverings that were installed in response to security measures necessary during the Covid shutdown. Considering the wood coverings exist and the mural improves the

appearance. The mural is allowed until the business opens at which time the panel will be removed. 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 18, 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.

**Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation**

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/CW/KS

5:0:1

The motion passed. BM O'Brien abstained.

*Vice-chair Torres and BM Plewinski were not present to vote.*

**031826.5 BOARD BUSINESS**

**031826.6 REPORT OF THE CHAIR**

**031826.7 STAFF REPORT**

SM Nashem reported on recently issued administrative certificates of approval, noting actions at several locations: new business signage at 145 South King Street in Stadium Place; installation of a sidewalk café on the new

wood decks in front of the Pioneer Hotel; new business signage at 309 Occidental; mechanical equipment installation at 419 Occidental in the Manufacturers Building related to a prior approval; additional mechanical equipment at 553 Fourth Avenue South in the Triangle Building; and emergency scaffolding at 117 Yesler in the Korn Building while structural assessments and repair applications are prepared.

Meeting adjourned at 10:47 a.m.