

Pioneer Square Preservation Board

Briefing Packet – Letter of Introduction

To: Pioneer Square Preservation Board

From: Alliance for Pioneer Square

Re: Pioneer Square Park

The Alliance for Pioneer Square is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization devoted to the betterment of Pioneer Square Park through advocacy, programming, marketing, and community action. The Alliance works to help preserve what makes Pioneer Square the most authentic, engaging, and dynamic neighborhood in Seattle, including parks and open spaces. The Alliance has received funding from the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to revisit the prior design for Pioneer Park which was completed in 2017. The project will fund the engineering, design, and public engagement for improvements to Pioneer Square Park which were identified in the Parks and Gateways Plan for Pioneer Square in 2016. These improvements will help to address the current challenges and opportunities facing our downtown.

The project scope includes meaningful engagement with the historically underserved community throughout Pioneer Square, hiring a community facilitator and landscape architect to collaborate with all stakeholders involved and the development of a design for Pioneer Square Park that serves the recreational and social needs of the community. The process will build on the previous design and include establishing goals to jointly reflect the diverse community and will include tribal organizations, houseless population, businesses, residents, social service providers and public partners who will work together to update the plan for a thriving downtown public space.

Cultural Resources Considerations

The project site includes several historic and/or protected elements including the historic pergola and an associated underground restroom and nine globe vents, a totem pole (both listed on the National Register of Historic Places), fountain, two heritage trees, the former Front Street granite curb and historic globe lights. The totem pole is a replacement pole that was carved by the Saxman Civilian Conservation Corp camp, near Ketchikan on Tongass Island. Tlingit boat builder Charles Brown was appointed lead carver at Saxman and thus carried out much of the final carving of the replica.

The Alliance has contracted with Willamette Cultural Resources who have completed a draft Built Environment Survey of the park. The report provides important direction to the design team on the project.

Local Tribal Government Engagement

We look forward to talking with local Tribal Governments to better understand and learn the cultural relevance and history of Pioneer Square Park. Our project team seeks to learn the park's unique stories and work with the Tribal Governments on a collaborative design process that highlights local Tribes' and urban native and indigenous perspectives of Pioneer Square Park. We are working with SPR who have initiated conversations with Tribal Governments. We will collaborate with our partners at Chief Seattle Club on outreach as well as participation with the urban native community.

Partners

The team is led by the Alliance for Pioneer Square and includes partners from Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation (SPR), Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) Downtown Seattle Association and a stakeholder group with representatives from the business and residential community.

PSPB

We seek early guidance on the project from the PSPB. We have attached the previous design for the park which was shared with the board in 2017. The current project scope includes further development of the 2017 design and we would like specific input from the board on how information from the Built Environment Survey can help guide the redesign of the park. We expect to come back to the PSPB once we have developed specific design ideas, in late 2024 or early 2025.

Outreach

A stakeholder meeting of partners, city departments, business owners and residents was held on August 22nd, 2024. Public engagement will include on site open house opportunities at the park to get input on the redesign.

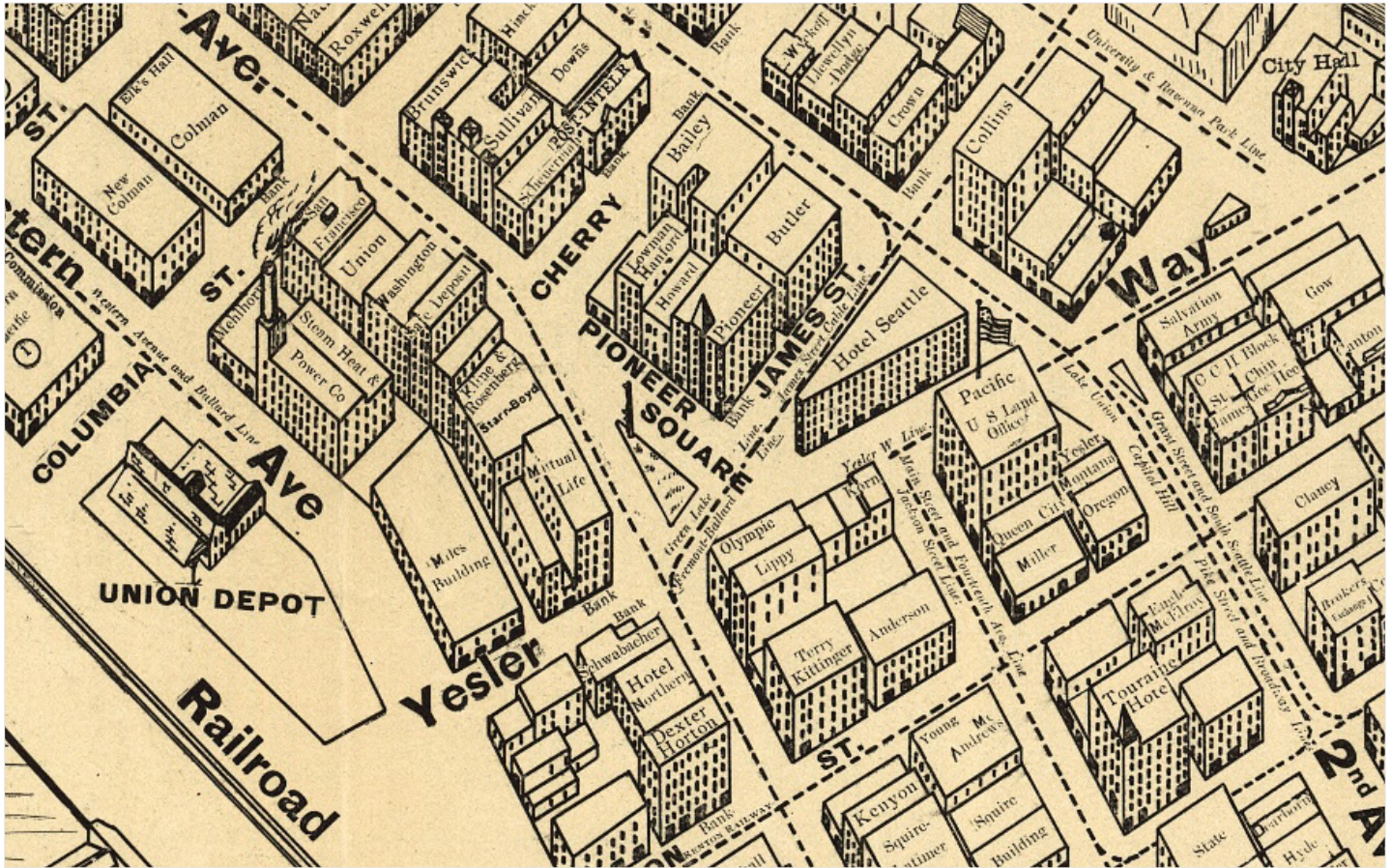
Attachments:

2017 Schematic Design

2024 Built Environment Survey, summary



WILLAMETTE
CULTURAL RESOURCES ASSOCIATES, LTD.



Built Environment Timeline for Pioneer Park, Seattle, Washington

I. Timeline

Time Immemorial: dʒidʒəlalič (“a little place where one crosses over, portages”)

Lushootseed-speaking peoples, namely the Duwamish, have traditionally occupied the area upon which Pioneer Park sits since time immemorial. A Duwamish village location known as dʒidʒəlalič (“a little place where one crosses over, portages”) was in the nearby vicinity of the present day park site. The location was associated with a trail that crossed over a promontory between Puget Sound and a lagoon to the east. There were reportedly villages located on the east and west sides of the promontory. The Duwamish traditionally lived in cedar plank houses in winter villages, often located at confluences of creeks and lakes, creeks and marine shorelines, or creeks and major streams: these locations provided excellent and abundant resources and easy access to transportation corridors. The Duwamish people are one of many traditional Lushootseed-speaking groups who travelled by canoe across the region’s waterways. The Duwamish people intermarried, interacted, and shared resources with neighboring peoples, including the Squaxin Island, Stillaguamish, Suquamish, Snoqualmie, Muckleshoot, Snohomish, and Puyallup; and individuals from these groups likely would have also at least traveled through the vicinity of dʒidʒəlalič in the past.¹

1853: Seattle townsite

European incursion and fur-tradition began in the 1790s, and traders introduced epidemics and new diseases that decimated the Puget Sound Salish population. After the formation of the Oregon Territory by US Congress in 1848, President Franklin Pierce established the boundaries of Washington Territory north of the Columbia River in 1853. That same year, Carson D. Boren (1824–1912) and Arthur A. Denny (1822–1899) filed plats for the initial townsite of Seattle, so named for Chief Si’ahl (1780–1866), leader of a 6-tribe confederation in central Puget Sound.²

c.1870s: Ballast Island

Ships dumping ballast in Elliott Bay near the shoreline in the 1870s created an island on the shoreline, located away to the southwest of present-day Pioneer Park. Ballast was composed of various types of non-native rock, bricks, sawdust, and other items. The island became important for Native people to congregate and camp in the late nineteenth century, after an 1865 City of Seattle Ordinance prohibited Native Americans from residing freely within the town’s limits. Individuals from throughout the region gathered at the island to conduct various cultural activities including trading, socializing, gambling, and establishing relations.³

¹ See WillametteCRA, Built Environment Survey for Pioneer Park, Seattle, Washington (“Pioneer Park”), pages 2–3 and 65–66.

² “Pioneer Park,” pages 3–5.

³ “Pioneer Park,” pages 65–66.

1892: A public square

The triangular area that includes present-day Pioneer Park was purchased by the City of Seattle from H. L. Yesler (1810–1892) in 1892; the sale agreement required the property to be used as a public square.⁴

1892–1893: Temporary mineral palace

A temporary exhibition hall, nicknamed “mineral palace,” was constructed in 1892 to commemorate the arrival of the Great Northern Railway. Construction materials were returned to the individuals who had donated them in 1893.⁵



Temporary “mineral palace,” Pioneer Place, Seattle, 1893. Photograph by Frank La Roche. View facing north on 1st Ave from James Street. Wikimedia

1893: Permanent sidewalks on the newly raised streets

In the fall of 1893, Seattle City Council passed an ordinance prescribing new sidewalks to be constructed at the level of the raised streets that had been built after the Great Fire of 1889. A triangular patch of lawn and curbed sidewalk were first constructed on the subject property during this year as the first iteration of the public park we know today (See Section III: Figure 1).

1899: Naas-shagee-yéil totem pole

Spurred by the Alaskan gold “fever” beginning in 1897, a “goodwill tour” exhibition embarked from Seattle to southeast Alaska in 1899 and landed at the village of Taant’a kwáan (or “Tongass”) Tlingit on Tongass Island on August 28. Eight men from the Seattle Chamber of Commerce disembarked and removed the largest totem pole in the village. The totem pole is

⁴ “Pioneer Park,” page 8.

⁵ “Pioneer Park,” page 9.

named “Na-sak yalth” (Naas-shagee-yéil in contemporary orthography), carved around 1870 to honor Aanséet, a high-ranking woman from Yan Wulihashi Hít (Drifted Ashore House) of the Gaanax.ádi clan of the Tongass Tlingit. The Chamber of Commerce gifted the stolen Naas-shagee-yéil pole to the Seattle City Council in a private meeting on October 2, 1899, and it was erected in Pioneer Park in front of a public crowd on October 18. Later that autumn, a federal grand jury in the Alaskan territory indicted the eight men, and two descendants of Aanséet, William Kinninook (b.1865, no death date found) and George Bond Kinninook (1859–1907) filed a claim for \$10,000 in damages (\$378,396 adjusted for inflation [AFI]). Only one \$500 payment (\$18,919 AFI) is on record. The totem pole remained in Seattle for the next four decades.⁶

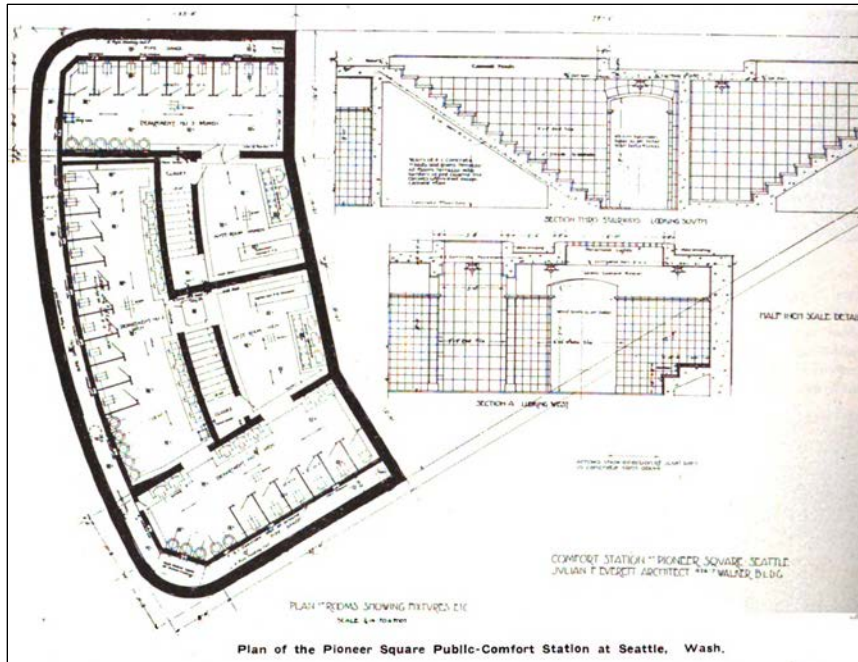


Pioneer Park, showing totem pole, fence, and Women's Christian Temperance Union drinking fountain, circa 1906. Looking southwest. Seattle Municipal Archives (SMA) – Identifier 111195.

⁶ “Pioneer Park,” pages 12–13.

1909: Public-comfort station

The contract for a “public-comfort” station was let in the spring of 1909 and opened as a public convenience on September 23; finishing touches to the superstructure were put on during the week of January 15, 1910 (See Section III: Figure 2).⁷



(Left) Detail from “Seattle’s First Down-Town Public-Comfort Station,” by Clancey M. Lewis, S.B. (Editor, “Pacific Bulder and Engineer”), in *Domestic Engineering*, Vol. L(7), 1910:168.

(Below) New drinking fountain in front of Totem Pole. *Seattle Star*, August 9, 1909:10.

1909: Chief Si’ahl fountain + horse trough

James A. Wehn (1882–1973) was the winner of a commission for the design of a commemorative sculpture to adorn three new fountains throughout the city. The commission was the result of a three-year campaign by the Humane society’s Anna Rasdale (1872–1921) to secure greater potable water access for animals. The bust he designed of Chief Si’ahl for Pioneer Park was installed at the north apex of the triangle in front of the totem pole, in August 1909. Seattle’s Board of Public Works contracted with local Vulcan Iron Works to purchase one fountain and an original pattern and two duplicates for concurrent installation in 1909. Records suggest that a patternmaker named Harry H. Keith (1887–1968) may have designed the original tri-part iron fountain pattern (See Section III: Figure 3).⁸



⁷ “Pioneer Park,” pages 20–24.

⁸ “Pioneer Park,” pages 18–19.

1909: Globe streetlights

The city's first lighting system, at the turn of the century, had used 80-candlepower tungsten lamps in 5-globe, 3-globe, and 1-globe designs on matching ornamental poles. These streetlights were replaced with an "acorn-style" light standard by the 1930s.⁹



Detail of real photograph postcard, O.T. Fresch, photographer, circa May 1909. View of First Ave. S from Cherry St., showing Pioneer Park following the installation of the 5-globe cluster streetlights in 1909, before the construction of the pergola. Adam Alsobrook Collection.

⁹ "Pioneer Park," page 50.



Pioneer Park Pergola, 1910. Looking northeast. SMA – Identifier 11922.



Pioneer Park, 1914. Looking northeast (lawn and fence are visible behind pergola). SMA – Identifier 29986.

1923: Redevelopment of Pioneer Park

In 1923, the Seattle parks board authorized the “beautification” and repaving of First Avenue and “cementing over” of Pioneer Park. Improvements required the relocation of the totem pole by twenty feet, from a point at the northern apex of the triangle to one midway along the east side of the triangle.

c. 1923: Planting of the pergola trees

Specific documentation is scarce, but it is likely during the 1923 beautification efforts that the city also installed a small planting bed to the north of the pergola with a short hedge and a grouping of four London Plane trees. The earliest documented photograph of the trees in 1940 shows trees which are still visibly in their pyramidal youth-form, but are clearly no longer saplings (See Section III: Figure 4) .¹⁰



Relocation of the totem pole for beautification of First Avenue, 1923. MOHAI Image 1983.10.2537.1

¹⁰ “Pioneer Park,” pages 24–25.



Photograph of the replica Totem Pole installed in Pioneer Park in 1940. Four trees in pyramidal youth-form are visible behind the totem pole. View facing southeast. SMA, Don Sherwood Parks History Collection, Identifier 29997.



Photograph of Pioneer Park, 1955, showing four trees and planting bed by pergola. SMA, Don Sherwood Parks History Collection, Identifier 30017.

1938–1940: Arson and replication of the c.1870 Tlingit totem pole

On the 23rd of October, 1938, newspapers reported that the Naas-shagee-yéil pole had barely survived an arson attack the evening prior. In April of 1939, the remains of the original totem pole were returned to Alaska and work began on carving a replacement. Commissioned and funded by the United States Forest Service, the replacement totem pole was carved by craftsmen at the Saxman Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) park on Tongass Island. Carvers completed the replica by spring of 1940; it was shipped from Saxman for Seattle on April 14, and gifted to the City of Seattle in a dedication ceremony in Pioneer Park on July 25 (See Section III: Figure 5).¹¹ The replica was carved by the following individuals:

- Charles W. Brown (1899–1972), lead carver at Saxman CCC park;
- William H. Brown (1870–1942), credited with “the final adzing” of the totem pole;
- Other carvers included: James C. Starrish (1881–1950), Robert Harris (1906–1955), William G. Andrews (1897–1963), and James Andrews (1899–1954).

c.1943: Comfort station closes

According to archived correspondence from the Seattle Parks and Recreation Building Department, the comfort station was closed about 1943. Reasons for the closure included ground settlement that resulted in a broken main sewer connection; the fact that it was “impossible” to procure parts for the old fixtures; and water constantly leaked into the rooms.¹²

c.1956–1960 Removal of two trees

Historic photographs show that the central two London Plane trees and the c.1923-era hedge had been removed by 1960.



Detail from photograph of Pioneer Park, 1960. SMA, Don Sherwood Parks History Collection, Identifier 29988.

¹¹ “Pioneer Park,” pages 26–29.

¹² “Pioneer Park,” page 30.

1970: National Register of Historic Places nomination

In June 22, 1970, the district was listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as the Pioneer Square–Skid Road National Historic District. District boundaries have been expanded three times since initial listing—in 1978, 1988, and 2005—growing from 52 to 91.3 acres in size. The period of significance for the park extends from 1889 to 1938, starting at the first iteration of the public park and ending at the installation of the replica totem pole (although current research reveals that the replica was completed and installed in 1940). The pergola was also individually listed in the NRHP by 1971.¹³

1971–1973: Grant Jones & Associates park redesign

The Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation selected the firm Grant Jones & Associates (JA) to design Pioneer Square and Occidental Parks. Though completed separately, the two parks were regarded as joint elements and the firm submitted complete drawings in November 1971, with construction of Pioneer Park commencing in August 1972. The park redesign included a new wrought iron fence; a system of Alaska Cedar benches; a mounted kiosk; ten London Plane trees; a new roof for the pergola; and salvaged sandstone cobblestones throughout (See Section III: Figures 6–9). The renewed pergola and square were dedicated in a civic ceremony at 10 a.m. on February 23, 1973.¹⁴

JA also developed a district-wide that included standards based on the city's original globe streetlights; five newly cast 5-globe standards were installed in January 5, 1973 (See Section III: Figure 10). 3-globe standards, also based on historic designs, were installed by the city in public rights-of-way along the adjacent streetscapes between 1974 and 1975.¹⁵

Concurrently, the City of Seattle contracted the repair and restoration of the 1940-era totem pole to John C. Hudson, Jr. (1936–2019), Seattle longshoreman and traditional carver from the Tsimshian Tribe of Northern British Columbia. The totem pole was taken down on May 23, 1972, with a crane operated by the city Transit Department; once repaired and outfitted with metal structural support, the totem pole was rededicated in ceremony on August 21.¹⁶

Historic features retained in the redesign:

- Two c.1923 trees behind the pergola
- First Street original granite curb, areaways, and light prisms
- Historic utility boxes and handholes in First Street sidewalk
- 1940-era replica totem pole
- Pergola
- Chief Si'ahl fountain

¹³ “Pioneer Park,” pages 38–47.

¹⁴ “Pioneer Park,” pages 48–58.

¹⁵ “Pioneer Park,” pages 50–51.

¹⁶ “Pioneer Park,” page 52.

New features added in 1973 redesign:

- Ten London Plane trees
- Central grass area
- Wrought iron fence
- Five double-sided benches
- Four single-sided benches (three under pergola, one in front of totem pole)
- Two approx. 52-foot-long single-sided benches
- Cobblestone paving throughout
- 5-globe light standards within park boundaries
- Information kiosk
- Anchored trash receptacles

1973 features that have since been removed:

- Grass planting area
- One single-sided bench under pergola
- Majority of both 52-foot-long single-sided benches (cut into three remaining benches)
- Information kiosk
- Cobblestones (majority removed; small sections remain)
- Trash receptacles



Photograph of Pioneer Park, c. August 1974. Visible elements include cobblestones, trees, benches, and kiosk in background. SMA, Historic Building Survey Photograph Collection, Identifier 206279.



Photograph of Pioneer Park, January 1975. SMA, Historic Building Survey Photograph Collection, Identifier 206277.



Detail of photograph of Pioneer Park, 1975. New trees, benches, and kiosk are visible. SMA, Historic Building Survey Photograph Collection, Identifier 206491.



Birds-eye view of Pioneer Park, newly redesigned by Jones and Associates, 1974. Long benches, grass area, and kiosk are visible; all three features since removed. SMA – Identifier 206989.

1977: National Historic Landmark nomination

In 1977, National Historic Landmark (NHL) status was approved for three elements within the park: the Pioneer Building, the pergola, and the nearby totem pole. Properties listed in the NRHP and as an NHL are both regulated by Section 106 and Section 110(f) of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, when federal funding or licensing of activities has an effect on such a property. Resources listed as an NHL feature additional involvement by the National Park Service and—in the case of federal or federally assisted undertakings that result in an “adverse effect” of an NHL resource—the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.¹⁷

1989–2004: Further changes

In 1989, the City of Seattle dedicated a new public artwork at Pioneer Park, “Day and Night,” created and installed by Southern Cheyenne artist Edgar Heap of Birds (b.1954). Originally intended as a temporary installation to celebrate Washington State’s centennial anniversary, the sculpture was immediately beloved by park visitors and has remained a permanent element of the Pioneer Park landscape. The sculpture is recorded as non-historic and non-contributing to the NRHP Historic District.¹⁸

The pergola was repaired again in 1993, including repairs to glass and replacement of metal ornamental fixtures, and electrical and lighting elements. A vehicular crash in 2001 impacted many structural elements and prompted extensive rehabilitation. Concurrent to pergola repairs, the 1909-era fountain and bust were relocated to their present location next to the Day and Night sculpture. In 2004, public concerns regarding the accessibility of the cobblestone material resulted in the replacement of a majority of the park’s cobblestones with brick pavers in 2004.¹⁹

Historic features retained in the extant park:

- First Street original granite curb, areaways and light prisms (c.1893)
- Historic utility boxes and handholes in First Street sidewalk (c.1893)
- Pergola (1909; refurbished and re-roofed 2001)
- Chief Si’ahl fountain (1909; relocated 2001)
- Two trees behind the pergola (c.1923)
- Replica totem pole (1940; refurbished 1972)
- London Plane trees (1973; six remain of ten total)
- Wrought iron fence (1973, patch repaired)
- Five double-sided benches (1973)
- Two single-sided benches (1973; two remain of four total)
- Three segments of one 52-foot-long bench (1973)
- Cobblestone paving (1973; small remnant left, largely removed 2004)
- 5-globe and 3-globe light standards (1973 and 1974-75)

¹⁷ “Pioneer Park,” pages 59–60 and 64.

¹⁸ “Pioneer Park,” page 61.

¹⁹ “Pioneer Park,” page 61.

II. Tabulated summary of features and regulatory agencies

	Build Date	Historic Register Status	NPS	ACHP	DAHP	SDOT	SDPR	PSHPB
Pergola + Associated Features	1909	Listed: NHL and NRHP	X	X	X		X	X
Totem Pole	1940	Listed: NHL and NRHP	X	X	X		X	X
Fountain	1909	Listed: NRHP			X		X	X
Sidewalk Prism Lights	1893	NRHP contributing characteristic			X	X	X	X
Historic Water Meter	c.1893	NRHP contributing characteristic			X		X	X
Historic Seattle City Light meter	c.1893	NRHP contributing characteristic			X		X	X
Found Monument	c.1893	NRHP contributing characteristic			X		X	X
Metal Catch Basins	c.1893	NRHP contributing characteristic			X		X	X
Tier 1 a.k.a. Heritage Trees*	c.1923	Heritage Tree; NRHP contributing characteristic			X	X	X	X
Tier 2 Trees	1973	NRHP contributing characteristic			X		X	X
Tier 3 Trees	Recent	Not Listed			X		X	X
Benches	1973	NRHP contributing characteristic			X		X	X
Cobblestones	1973	NRHP contributing characteristic			X		X	X
Triangle Fence	1973	NRHP contributing characteristic			X		X	X
3-Globe Light Standards	1973	NRHP contributing characteristic			X	X	X	X
5-Globe Light Standards	c.1974	NRHP contributing characteristic			X		X	X
"Day and Night" Sculpture	1989	Determined non-contributing					X	X
Commemorative Plaques	Post-2000	Not listed					X	X
Non-Heritage Plantings	Post-2000	Not listed					X	X
Street Furniture**	Post-2000	Not listed				X	X	X
Non-globe Street Lights	Post-2000	Not listed				X	X	X

*Technically one Heritage Tree is listed under that title on the Seattle.gov Tree Inventory: the easternmost pergola tree, Heritage map ID: TRE-1054314. Both pergola trees can be defined as "Tier 2 Trees" (any tree at 24 inches in diameter at standard heights [DSH]). The southernmost tree, leaning into James St is also Tier 2, at 28 inch DSH. The remaining 1972-planted trees are "Tier 3" at ~17 inches DSH. (Tier 3 is defined as "12 inches DSH or greater but less than 24 inches DSH, and not defined as a Tier 1 or Tier 2 tree").

** Per the City of Seattle, "street furniture" includes: bus shelters, bollards, signal boxes, mailboxes, pay phones, trash receptacles, newspaper stands, and vending carts both permanent and mobile.

III. Pioneer Park Historic-age Features

All photos in this section by WillametteCRA, 2024

Figure 1. Sidewalk Prism Lights and First Ave. Granite Curb: c.1893



Figure 2. Pergola and Associated Features: 1909

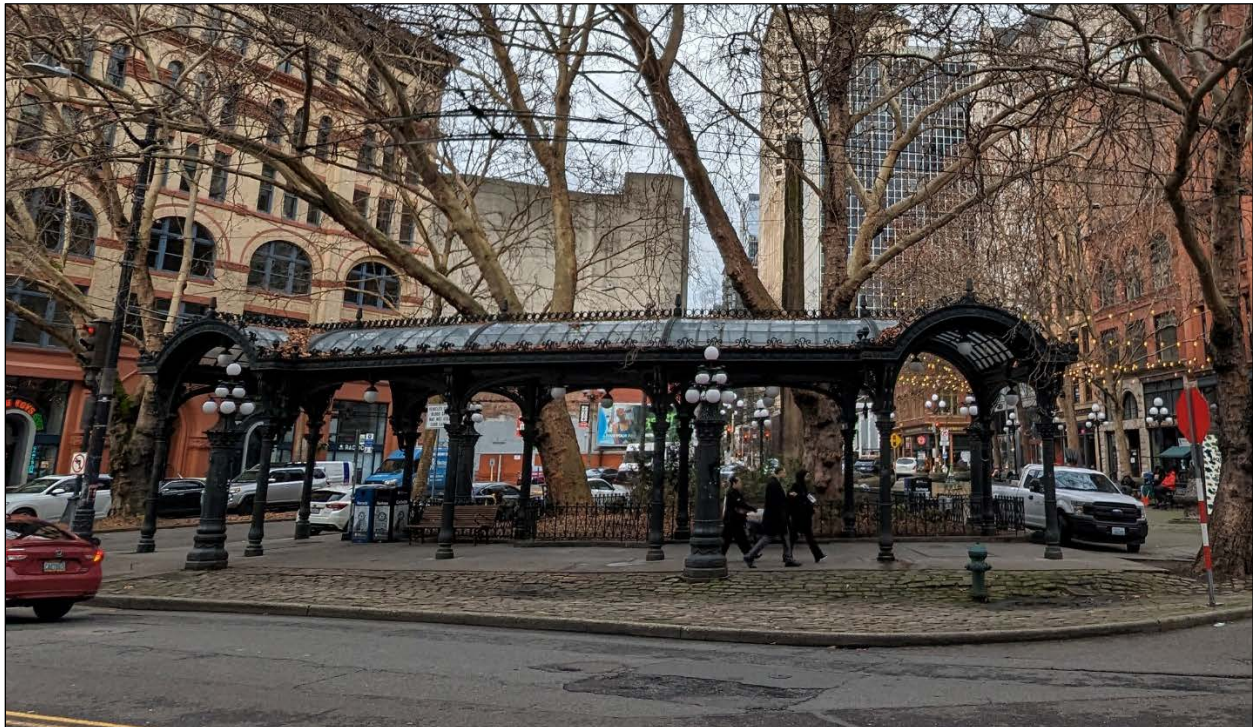


Figure 3. Fountain: 1909, moved 2001



Figure 4. Tier 1 Trees: c.1923



Figure 5. Replica Totem Pole: 1940

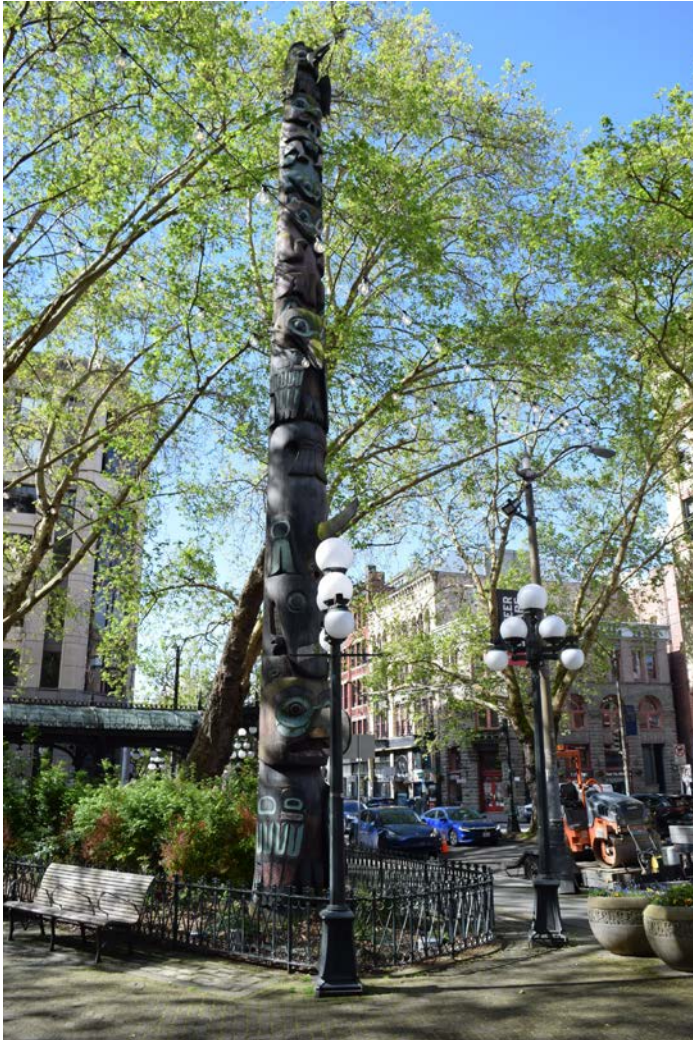


Figure 6. Wrought Iron Fence: 1973



Figure 7. Benches: 1973



Figure 8. Tier 2 Trees: 1973



Figure 9. Cobblestones: 1973



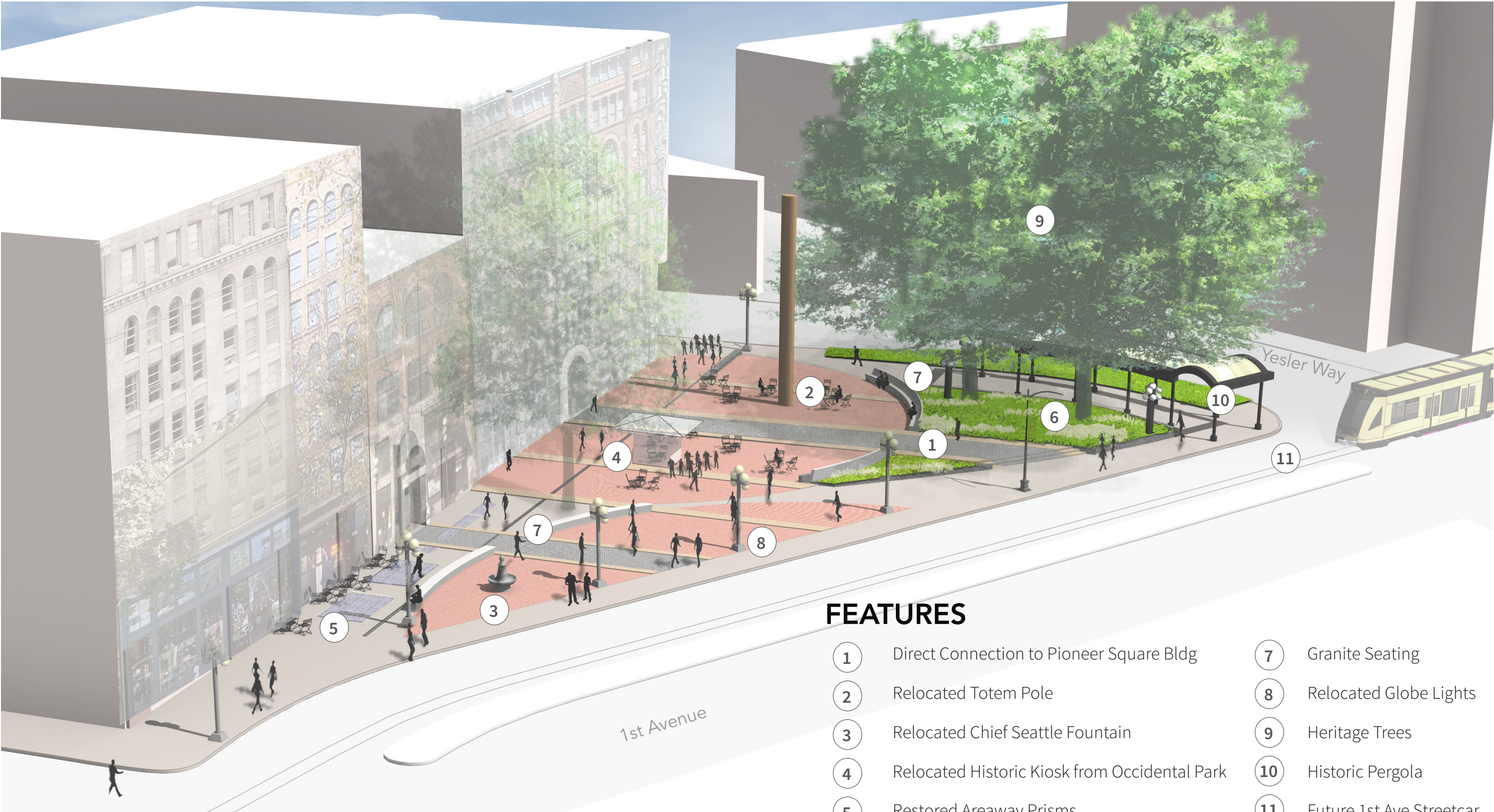
Figure 10. 5-Globe Lights: 1973



Figure 11. 3-Globe Lights: c.1974–1975



SITE PLAN

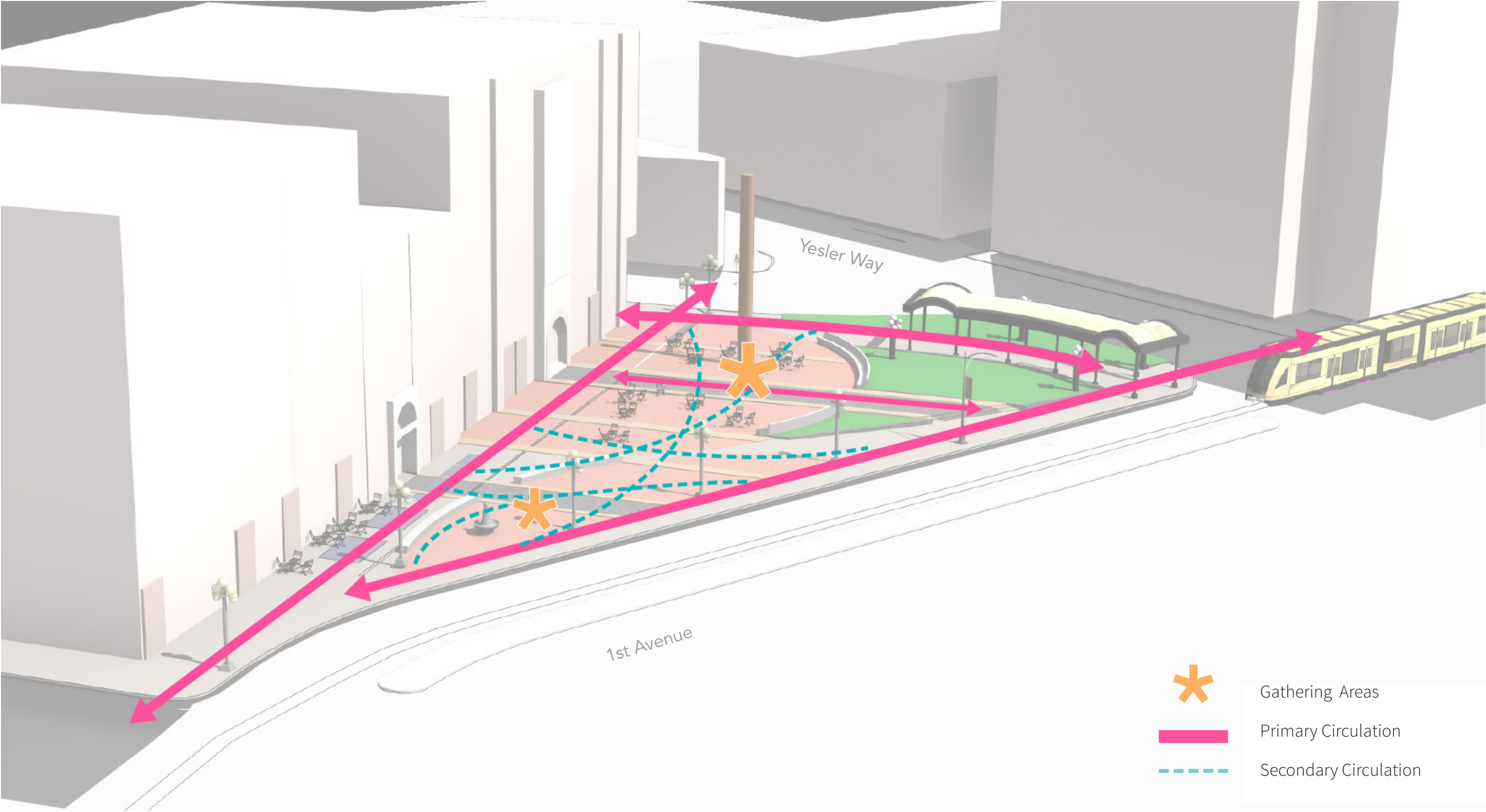


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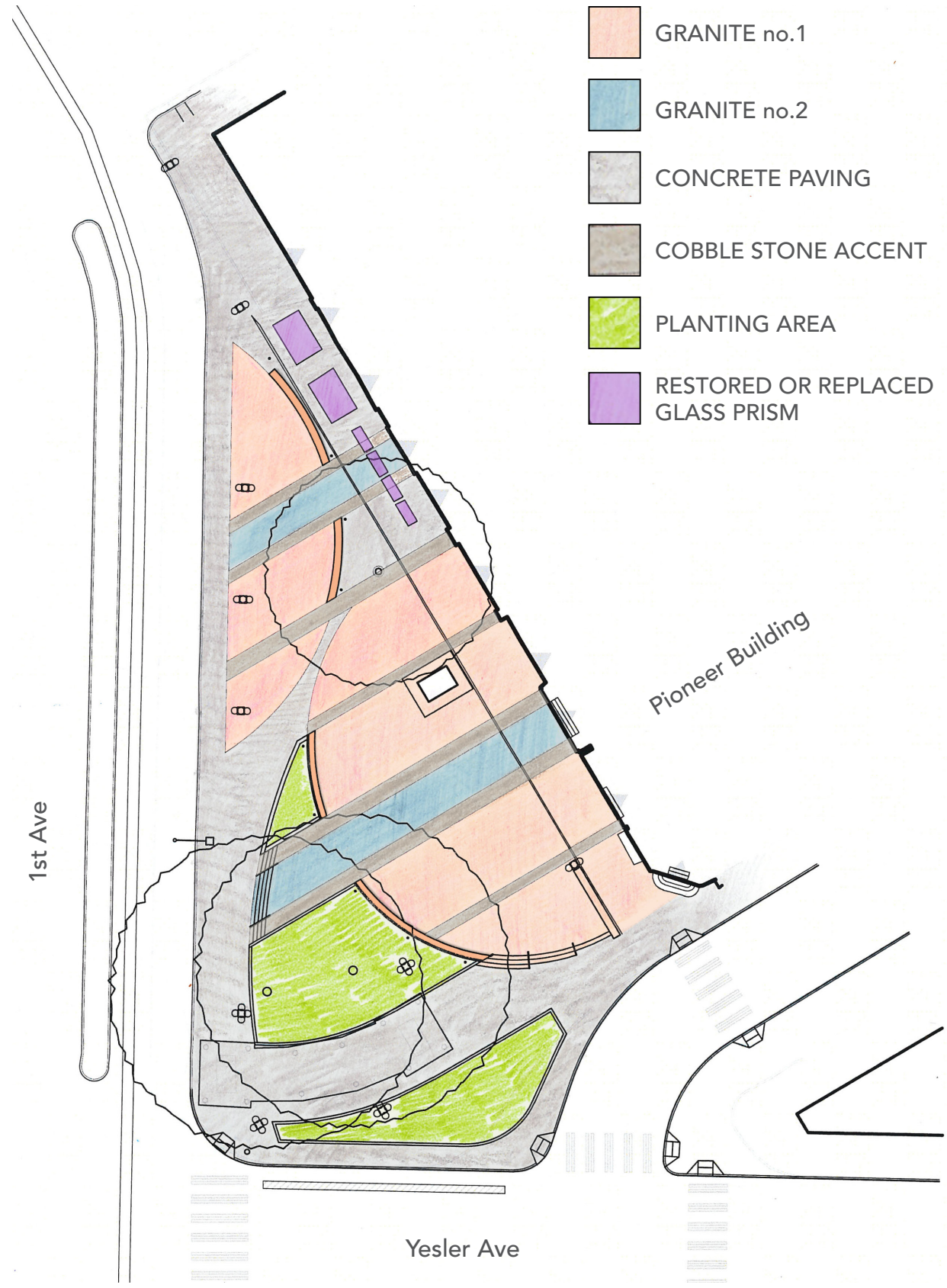
FEATURES

- | | | | |
|---|---|----|--------------------------|
| 1 | Direct Connection to Pioneer Square Bldg | 7 | Granite Seating |
| 2 | Relocated Totem Pole | 8 | Relocated Globe Lights |
| 3 | Relocated Chief Seattle Fountain | 9 | Heritage Trees |
| 4 | Relocated Historic Kiosk from Occidental Park | 10 | Historic Pergola |
| 5 | Restored Areaway Prisms | 11 | Future 1st Ave Streetcar |
| 6 | Historic Shoreline Inspired Planting | | |

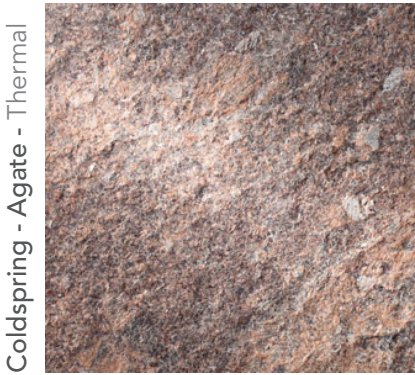
CIRCULATION DIAGRAM



MATERIAL PALETTE



GRANITE no. 1



GRANITE no. 2



CONCRETE



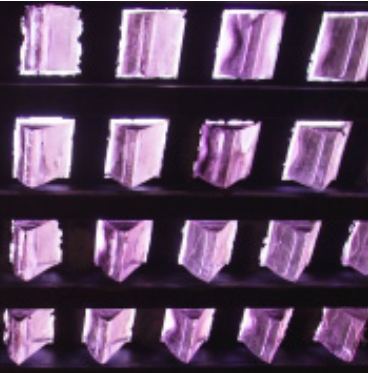
COBBLE STONE ACCENT



PLANTING



GLASS PRISM



PROPOSED DESIGN “Little Crossing over Place”

View from James for Open House One



FEATURES

- 1 No seating beneath pergola “gateway”
- 2 Elevated, open plaza offers views and more comfortable seating area
- 3 Historic character and materials highlighted