



Office of Economic Development  
City of Seattle

## Briefing Memo

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**Date:** June 3, 2010

**To:** Seattle City Council

**CC:** Marjorie Clark  
Phyllis Shulman, Legislative Assistant

**From:** Steve Johnson, Acting Director, OED  
Nancy Yamamoto, Sr. Policy Advisor, OED

**Re:** Pioneer Square Commercial Revitalization Initiative

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This briefing memo provides background information and discussion points for the June 7th Committee of the Whole briefing on the Pioneer Square Revitalization Committee's work and its recommendations for improving the neighborhood's economic health.

### Background

The Pioneer Square Commercial District Revitalization Project is an initiative to improve the overall business health of Pioneer Square. Since last November, we've been working with the Pioneer Square business community to identify how we can reestablish the neighborhood's competitiveness and strengthen the health of its businesses.

The Pioneer Square Committee has concluded its work to identify Pioneer Square's priorities and the community/city strategies necessary for improving the neighborhood's economic health. These priorities are focused on:

- **Public Safety Experience and Perception.** There is a general sense that there is a lower threshold of acceptable behavior tolerated in Pioneer Square. The group hopes to increase civility and stewardship of the neighborhood by convening all stakeholders, including human service providers, stadiums and nightclubs, to agree on a collective and shared set of expectations around public behavior.
- **Residential Density and the Adaptive Reuse of Historic Buildings.** The group strongly supports new market-rate density in Pioneer Square. In addition, there is a strong desire to take an aggressive approach to the neighborhood's vacant/blighted buildings.
- **Infrastructure for Economic Growth.** The neighborhood has a growing cluster of digital media and technology businesses that the group is interested in targeting for growth. The needs of this sector, plus the additional density that is targeted for the neighborhood has infrastructure implications, particularly around broadband, utilities and parking.
- **Strong Business Advocacy and Capacity.** The neighborhood has suffered from a void in organizational capacity to implement a strong program of business district support. The

community is in the process of transitioning the Pioneer Square Community Association into a new economic development entity that will focus on the core components of strong commercial districts, such as streetscape, promotion, and business outreach.

The Pioneer Square Committee has identified community and city strategies for addressing these priorities in “Pioneer Square 2015: A Strategy for Seattle’s First Neighborhood.” There is strong participation and interest from the community in moving quickly towards implementation of these recommendations.

## **Discussion**

This briefing will focus on the steps that the Pioneer Square Committee is taking to implement its recommendations and what potential actions the City can take to address the neighborhood’s business priorities. Two significant strategies already underway are the Livable South Downtown proposal and the streetcar alignment through Pioneer Square. Specific actions they would like to see the city undertake include:

- Address vacant/blighted buildings through stricter enforcement of historic preservation and code regulations.
- Complete an analysis of the emerging business clusters in Pioneer Square and development a strategy to grow these businesses. For example, digital media appears to have a growing presence in the neighborhood.
- Address infrastructure needs. This includes utilities like electrical and broadband, as well as public restrooms and facilities to address needs of visitors and homeless population.
- Actively participate in a city/community’s public civility workgroup that will be focused on raising the public safety experience in the neighborhood. There is also a strong interest in continuing a robust program of activation and better management of public spaces (e.g. Fortson Square).

Several departments, including the Department of Neighborhoods (DON), the Department of Planning and Development (DPD), Seattle Policy Department’s West Precinct (SPD), and the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) have been staffing this effort with OED and we will be reviewing the community’s recommendations and identifying a response that we will share with City Council.

In the near term, OED will be working with the Pioneer Square Community Association on its organizational transition and is convening a discussion with the business community to pinpoint potential broadband solutions. SPD and DON have agreed to support the community’s public civility workgroup, and SDOT is initiating a parking study. DPD is also working with the Pioneer Square community and the Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs to implement a storefront activation program this summer. Parks and Recreation has also been working with the members of the Pioneer Square Committee to launch a Saturday Market this summer.

### **Attachment:**

Report of the Pioneer Square Revitalization Committee: “Pioneer Square 2015: A Strategy for Seattle’s First Neighborhood”