

**PUBLIC SPACE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
Implementation Strategy**

The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is developing a Public Space Management Program. There continue to be new and creative ways that Seattle residents and businesses want to use the public right-of-way; often, the City is not able to allow or effectively regulate these activities, either because of existing policies, codes, or processes or due to limited resources. The Public Space Management Program will work directly with Seattle residents and businesses to activate the right-of-way so that people will be encouraged to linger and enjoy public spaces. An active and vibrant right-of-way will enhance the character of Seattle’s neighborhoods and promote economic vitality in the Center City and in neighborhood business districts.

In early 2013, at the direction of Mayor McGinn and the City Council, SDOT convened the Public Space Management Task Force—a 34-person team of City staff, community members, business representatives, planners, and designers—to help SDOT identify and prioritize the elements that should be part of this new Public Space Management Program. The Task Force reviewed current and best practices and guided the development of this implementation strategy for the Public Space Management Program.

Task Force Membership

The Task Force included 34 individuals who live and/or work in Seattle, about half of them internal (City) members and the other half external (see Table 1). Members represented a variety of interests and neighborhoods and possessed the ability to work within and across diverse constituencies. While they were not necessarily public space experts, the Task Force members were passionate about the importance of public spaces and the management of those spaces. The Task Force worked collaboratively to develop an approach to the Public Space Management Program that enhances the wellbeing of the broader Seattle community.

Table 1: Task Force Members

Name	Affiliation / Neighborhood / Department
Amy Gray	SDOT Street Use, Legislation and Policy
Angela Steel	SDOT Street Use, Public Space Management
Bill LaBorde	Councilmember Rasmussen’s Office
Brian dePlace	SDOT Street Use, Right-of-Way Manager
Brian Hawksford	Councilmember Rasmussen’s Office

Name	Affiliation / Neighborhood / Department
Brian Schroeder	Georgetown resident; architect
Brice Maryman	SvR Design Company
Cari Simson	Urban Systems Design (consultant)
Ching Chan	Seattle Chinatown/ID Public Development Authority
Don Blakeney	Chinatown/ID Business Improvement Area
Dongho Chang	SDOT Traffic Management, City Traffic Engineer
Gary Johnson	Department of Planning and Development (DPD)
Hannah Marzynski	Ravenna resident; accessible design
Jon Scholes	Downtown Seattle Association (DSA)
Jordan Lewis	University of Washington graduate student
Josh Henderson	Small business (and mobile food business) owner
Karis Jones	Beacon Hill resident; student
Kathy Nyland	Councilmember Bagshaw's Office
Kristen Lohse	Pedestrian/bicycle planning and design
Kristen Simpson	SDOT Traffic Management, Plan Implementation Manager
Laurie Ames	Department of Neighborhoods (DON)
Liz Stenning	International Sustainability Institute (Pioneer Square)
Mark Bandy	Ballard resident; civil engineer
Michele Scoleri	Mayor's Office
Mike Kent	Central District resident; urban planner
MJ Kiser	Compass Housing Alliance (Downtown)
Paul Gracy	Seattle Police Department (SPD)
Randy Engstrom	Office of Arts and Culture (OAC)
Seth Geiser	Seattle Design Commission
Seth Schromen-Wawrin	Pedestrian/bicycle planning and design
Sherry Lawson	Westlake Center General Manager
Susan McLaughlin	SDOT Policy and Planning, Urban Designer
Tina Vlasaty	Office of Economic Development (OED)
Victoria Schoenburg	Seattle Parks and Recreation (Parks)

Task Force Charge

Mayor McGinn and the City Council charged the Task Force with defining a comprehensive public space management strategy to enliven public spaces, support vibrant streets and neighborhoods, and promote economic vitality. To complete this work, the Task Force engaged in the following activities:

1. Created a comprehensive list of program areas—building upon elements contemplated in the Seattle Pedestrian Master Plan and the Center City Initiative—including vending of goods in the right-of-way, parklets, newspaper boxes, A-frame signs, permanent play equipment, green infrastructure, alley and public plaza activation, and street furniture;
2. Identified the benefits and complexities of each program area, including permitting opportunities and challenges, design guidance and other general parameters for siting, as well as safety and liability issues;
3. Determined where opportunities exist for public/private partnerships;
4. Defined the policy and regulatory changes and management tools needed to implement each program area; and
5. Prioritized the program areas to facilitate City decisions on staffing and funding future work items.

Process

The Public Space Management Task Force met six times between the end of January and mid-May 2013. Meeting products—such as agendas, summaries, and presentations—will be posted online when the Public Space Management Program website is developed. The sections below provide an overview of the Task Force’s work, culminating in the prioritized list of implementation actions for the next five years.

Program Areas

The Task Force first brainstormed program areas that should be part of the Public Space Management Program. This exercise generated 37 different program areas, listed alphabetically below, as well as 11 different features that Task Force members identified as “considerations” for the program areas.

Program Areas

- A-frame signs (i.e., portable signs)
- Alley activation
- Art installations
- Benches
- Bike sharing
- Bike parking
- Buskers
- Community projects and neighborhood “beautification”
- Drinking fountains
- Farmers’ markets
- Festival streets
- Gardening

- Green infrastructure (e.g., swales, rain gardens)
- Greenways
- Information sharing and dissemination
- Interpretative signs
- Mobile food vending
- Newspaper boxes
- Parklets
- Pavement to parks
- Pedestrian lighting
- Performance space
- Planting strips
- Play equipment
- Pole banners
- Public plaza activation
- Public toilets (e.g., Portland Loo)
- Shared space (e.g., woonerfs)
- Shoreline street ends
- Sidewalk cafés
- Street canvassers
- Street closures (e.g., block parties)
- Street furniture
- Transit facilities
- Vending
- Walking trails and pedestrian pathways
- Waste management
- Wayfinding

Program Features

- Accessibility
- All ages (kids and seniors)
- Color and fun
- Design quality and materials (temporary and permanent)
- Geographic considerations
- Neighborhood distinctions
- Private use of public space
- Public/private partnerships
- Sponsorships
- Walkable zone
- Weather protection

The Task Force refined the list of program areas over the course of the six meetings to reflect synergies between program areas, areas that did not “fit” within the evolving definition of the program, efforts successfully managed by others, and potential efficiencies in implementation for combined programs. For example, “greenways” (or “neighborhood greenways”) is a new program defined in the 2013 update to the Bicycle Master Plan and implemented by SDOT’s Traffic Management Division. Another example is the combination of “buskers” and “performance space,” two program areas that were combined in the final work plan because of their direct relationship.

The Task Force used the program features as the basis for defining successful program areas. These features also were incorporated into the mission statement and goals and objectives for the program.

Program Mission Statement and Goals

Building on an early brainstorming exercise to define public space, activation, and management, the Task Force developed a mission statement for the Public Space Management Program that is both succinct enough to be easily understood and broad enough to encompass all that the program strives to achieve:

Seattle's Public Space Management Program promotes and regulates a vibrant, safe, accessible, and attractive shared right-of-way.

To further articulate the mission statement, the Task Force identified four goals for the program. Objectives that will be used to measure the program's success support each goal. The objectives and sample metrics are provided below (see "Measuring Success"). The goals are:

- **ENCOURAGE:** Promote the activation of public space
- **IMPLEMENT:** Ensure that opportunities to activate the right-of-way are not missed due to perceived obstacles or implementation hurdles
- **INNOVATE:** Identify opportunities for activation
- **REGULATE:** Manage our public spaces in a transparent and predictable way

Elements of Success and Management Tools

The goals and objectives are an important lens for evaluating the overall success of the Public Space Management Program, but the Task Force also identified the need to define success for each individual program area. To identify the actions needed to make each program area successful, they developed a list of elements of successful programs:

- Accessible
- Adaptable
- Affordable
- Clear expectations
- Cost effective
- Diversity
- Functional
- Healthy
- Inspections and enforcement
- Lawful
- One-stop shopping
- Ownership
- Partnerships
- Predictable and consistent
- Quality design
- Replicable
- Safe
- Self-policing
- Shared benefits
- Stewardship
- Sustainable
- Transparent
- Variety
- Well maintained

Ensuring success for each program area will require appropriate management tools. The Task Force identified potential management tools—including policy changes, design standards, communications materials, and inspection and enforcement actions—and worked in small groups to evaluate case studies and develop recommendations. The five case studies provided a foundation for additional small group work to define recommendations for the remaining program areas. The case studies and the recommendations for each program area will be available on the Public Space Management Program website.

Program Area Prioritization

The Task Force worked both in small groups and as a large group to prioritize the program areas based on a set of objective prioritization criteria as well as their own opinions, perspectives, and expertise. The prioritization criteria included the following:

- Encourages activation and provides opportunities
- Serves a diversity of people
- Improves access and safety
- Includes partnerships to ensure sustainability
- Builds new spaces or places
- Fixes or enhances an existing program
- Makes a process easier or more clear

Table 2 displays the results of the prioritization process. The Task Force underscored the value of each program area and focused their decisions on the need for action within the program areas as well as the opportunities to achieve positive outcomes. Urgent program areas are the highest priority for action and should begin immediately, important program areas are the second priority and should start sooner rather than later, and stable program areas need limited intervention due to recent program or policy changes but should be monitored.

Table 2: Work Plan Phasing

Urgent	Important	Stable
Alley Activation Business and Neighborhood Amenities Coordinated Street Furniture Enforcement Green Infrastructure Parklets Public Loos and Drinking Fountains	A-Frame Signs Buskers and Performance Space Festival Streets Newspaper Boxes Pavement to Parks Play Equipment Pole Banners Public Plazas Shared Spaces Vending of Merchandise	Farmers’ Markets Gardening Mobile Food Vending Sidewalk Cafes Street Closures

Work Plan and Implementation Actions

The Task Force identified the needs for each program area, focusing first on what would make each program area successful, what potential pitfalls should be avoided, and what management tools would be needed. This effort provided clear direction on the goal and desired outcomes for each program area. To operationalize the goals and outcomes, program staff developed a five-year work plan for the program that identifies specific implementation actions, 2013 deliverables, and the level of complexity for each program area (see Attachment A: Implementation Actions). Complexity includes externalities (e.g., code restrictions, design considerations), resources (e.g., staff time, material costs), and partners (e.g., other City departments). The Task Force recommended that elements of different program areas move forward simultaneously, and the work plan and 2013 deliverables reflect this direction.

Resources

The draft work plan reflects SDOT's existing resources. While the Public Space Management Program is in its early phases, additional resources would enable the department to expedite development and implementation of individual program areas. For example, with additional resources, it would be possible to complete all of the actions identified for "Business and Neighborhood Amenities" by the end of 2014. However, a reduction in current resources would slow the implementation schedule for most program areas.

As new program areas are fully developed and implemented, additional resources will be required to effectively manage these areas. The Public Space Management Program will demand a high degree of customer service—both proactive community outreach and direct contact with applicants—to ensure successful implementation. Design coordination also will be critical for many of the program areas. And finally, additional resources for enforcement of permitted activities will be needed as new programs are developed.

In addition to the future resource needs, the "Enforcement" program area needs additional resources immediately to provide the level of service recommended by the Task Force. This program area was developed to acknowledge that the enforcement of unpermitted activities requires resources beyond those available for the annual inspection of permitted activities. The existing level of service is well below that desired by the Task Force, especially downtown and along the central waterfront. However, the enforcement of unpermitted activities does not generate revenue and, therefore, does not directly support staff time. Because this type of enforcement is not revenue-generating, SDOT currently is unable to dedicate a full-time inspector to address unpermitted activities. Instead, responsibility is shared among the five inspectors who inspect and enforce more than 7,000 existing annual permits citywide.

To fully implement the Public Space Management Program and provide the level of service needed—from early outreach to regular enforcement of both permitted and unpermitted

activities—additional resources will be needed. SDOT will continue to work with the Mayor and City Council to seek funding for additional staff to support this new body of work.

Measuring Success

The Public Space Management Program is a large and complex program that will implement new program areas, policies, and procedures to effectively manage activation in the right-of-way. To ensure that the program's mission and goals are achieved, progress will be monitored and reported annually. The Task Force developed draft objectives for program evaluation; each objective has a sample metric that will be used to create a "dashboard" reporting system. These metrics will be defined further in late 2013 and included in the Public Space Management Program's first annual report.

ENCOURAGE: Promote the activation of public space

- Increase opportunities for individuals or groups to express themselves in the public realm, encouraging interactions between people of all backgrounds
 - Sample metric: # of permits issued for neighborhood block parties
- Foster public-private partnerships
 - Sample metric: # of permits issued for public amenities
- Support both spontaneous and planned activation
 - Sample metric: # of festival street designations
- Develop programs that allow for creative variety and flexible definitions of "activation"
 - Sample metric: Parklet program launched
- Communicate information about policies and programs clearly
 - Sample metric: New website for program launched

IMPLEMENT: Ensure that opportunities to activate the right-of-way are not missed due to perceived obstacles or implementation hurdles

- Improve the ability to respond nimbly to community needs and interests
 - Sample metric: Streamlined permit process developed for community projects
- Develop new public space policies and management tools
 - Sample metric: New permit type created for parklets
- Revise existing public space policies and management tools
 - Sample metric: Adoption of newspaper box Director's Rule

INNOVATE: Identify opportunities for activation

- Coordinate and negotiate between the many different activities that constantly define and redefine the characteristics and quality of public space
 - Sample metric: Map of opportunity areas created

- Create public spaces that add character and interest to the right-of-way and accommodate people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities
 - Sample metric: Accessible design standards developed for A-frame signs
- Pursue activation at various scales: from smaller-than-a mailbox (small-scale neighborhood) to bigger-than-a-city-block (big-picture urban)
 - Sample metric: # of community-generated projects implemented
- Develop innovative approaches to activation
 - Sample metric: # of pilot projects launched

REGULATE: Manage our public spaces in a transparent and predictable way

- Issue permits to support active uses of the right-of-way
 - Sample metric: # of public space management permits issued
- Conduct inspections to ensure mobility, safety, and accessibility
 - Sample metric: Inspection priorities revised to match program goals
- Address non-permitted uses of the right-of-way through targeted enforcement
 - Sample metric: # of enforcement actions by geography
- Ensure consistent application of policies, standards, and management tools
 - Sample metric: Standards for “maintaining mobility” reviewed
- Cultivate a sense of stewardship and community ownership
 - Sample metric: Community maintenance agreements established

Conclusion

The Public Space Management Task Force identified and prioritized 22 program areas that will activate the right-of-way to enhance the character of Seattle’s neighborhoods and promote economic vitality. Further development of these program areas will begin immediately, based on the implementation actions for the next five years. SDOT will work with City departments and agencies, community organizations and neighborhood groups, and other public and private partners to advance the goals and objectives of the Public Space Management Program as quickly as possible with existing resources. SDOT will produce an annual report to track success in developing and implementing the program.

Attachments

- Attachment A: Implementation Actions
- Attachment B: Implementation Strategy Briefing