City of Seattle
Mayor Katie B. Wilson

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Office of the Mayor
City of Seattle
Katie B. Wilson, Mayor

Executive Order 2026-06: An Executive Order convening a Resilient Seattle Economy Task Force to develop and implement strategies for diversifying and growing Seattle's economy and directing City departments to: develop a proposal for a "Seattle Strategic Initiatives Fund" Development Finance Institution; align their assets and investments with the goals of the Task Force; and make it faster, easier, and less expensive to open, operate, and grow a business in Seattle.

Recitals:

The Office of Economic Development commissioned a business climate assessment to help Seattle policymakers and civic leaders cultivate a diversified economy that invites creatives and entrepreneurs to innovate, supports and builds abundant and affordable housing, generates tax revenue to sustain critical services, and produces abundant good jobs and career pathways that give Seattle residents more economic freedom, stability and upward mobility.

A safe, livable, walkable city with abundant housing, transportation, childcare, and vibrant neighborhood encourages economic growth, supports business and job retention, and attracts new businesses to the city.

Seattle has numerous competitive advantages to attract, retain, and grow its business sectors and strengthen its economic ecosystem including highly skilled workers, world-class universities, innovation hubs, a robust non-profit sector, philanthropic partners, award winning restaurants, countless centers that promote arts and culture, a stadium district connected to our downtown core, and unsurpassed natural beauty.

The Seattle metropolitan economy delivered more broad-based prosperity than almost any other U.S. region over the past decade: wages grew at every level of the income spectrum, and fastest at the 10th percentile.

There are many broader forces outside the City's control that are shaping Seattle's economy, including the opportunities and challenges brought by artificial intelligence, changes in immigration policy, high interest rates, uncertainty from tariffs, volatile energy markets, and geopolitics.

Recent layoffs by large companies in Seattle and the surrounding area, driven by these broader forces, put the City at risk of losing its greatest asset, its residents, to other regions.

Commercial vacancies remain elevated and lower commercial property values mean increased property taxes for residents.

Organizations supporting start-ups have identified challenges in finding suitable facilities and capital that would allow growing companies to move out of incubator spaces and remain in Seattle.

Seattle has lagged behind its peers in the growth of medium-sized businesses over the past 5-10 years, and venture capital investments relative to economic output and growth are significantly deficient.

Seattle's economy has become increasingly concentrated in the tech sector, and the City's budget has increasingly relied on high-wage earners at large firms.

It is in the interest of the City's general welfare to make deliberate efforts to encourage new and existing industries to innovate in ways that serve clear public goals. The city can do this through establishing a clear structure for public-private partnerships to intentionally deploy capital to support economic growth in key sectors and using public procurement to encourage innovation.

The City has an important and effective continuum of programs from the Office of Economic Development that support small businesses and build community wealth, coordinate with key industries, labor partners, and community-based organizations, and provide support to businesses as they launch and grow. The Seattle Department of Construction and

Inspections provides valuable coaching to small business, has prioritized permitting for any business occupying a vacant storefront downtown, and offers mobile-friendly online support in multiple languages to access permit guidance.

We intend to maintain these efforts and recognize it is time to build upon them to support Seattle's next phase of economic innovation and growth. That includes making it faster, easier, and less expensive to open, operate, and grow a business in Seattle. The City is committed to manage, leverage, and align the City's assets to promote economic development and diversification.

THEREFORE, I, Katie B. Wilson, Mayor of Seattle, hereby order the following actions:

Section 1. Resilient Seattle Economy Task Force

The Office of Economic Development (OED) shall convene a Resilient Seattle Economy Task Force, which shall be a key partner in meeting the needs and opportunities of Seattle's economy while building strong civic connections across sectors. The Task Force shall develop strategies that are informed by the key findings and recommendations of the "Seawall: Building a Resilient Seattle Economy" report, industry and community listening sessions, and other relevant reports and analysis.

The Task Force shall make recommendations to leverage Seattle's economic assets – businesses, capital, institutions, and its workforce – to attract, retain, and grow businesses in Seattle, particularly in key and innovative industries where City action can tip the scales towards success including cleantech and the creative economy.

OED shall work in collaboration with the Task Force to review and analyze research, case studies, and best practices to inform these strategies. OED shall convene the Task Force by

October 31, 2026. The Task Force shall meet monthly and convene issue-specific roundtables to identify challenges and specific solutions for identified topics.

The Task Force shall deliver an initial set of recommendations to the Mayor's Office by February 15, 2027. Final recommendations are due September 15, 2027.

Section 2. Seattle Strategic Initiatives Fund

The Office of Economic Development shall develop a proposal to establish a "Seattle Strategic Initiatives Fund" Development Finance Institution (DFI). The DFI should be designed to deploy flexible capital funding to execute a strategy that works with businesses as key assets to the region and supports innovation, business and job growth in key industries.

OED shall coordinate with the Resilient Seattle Economy Task Force in developing this proposal. The proposal shall include recommendations on the structure and financing needed to make a meaningful impact in diversifying our economy and supporting new business creation and growth in targeted sectors. OED shall deliver a proposal to the Mayor's Office by September 15, 2027.

Section 3. Align City of Seattle Assets with the Resilient Seattle Economy Task Force Strategies

The Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle City Light, Seattle Public Utilities, Department of Finance and Administrative Services, and Seattle Information Technology Department shall develop strategies to support the goals and recommendations of the Resilient Seattle Economy Task Force and the Seattle Strategic Initiatives Fund. Key actions include:

a. Position the City as an early adopter of innovative technologies and practices while staying aligned with the City's progressive values and maintaining privacy and security controls for residents and businesses, working with Seattle IT to streamline requirements that could negatively impact adoption.
b. Review and adjust procurement policies and processes to remove barriers and promote investments in smaller, local, and cutting-edge businesses, with a focus on WMBE firms.
c. Continue existing technical assistance focusing on targeted education to support firms navigating City procurement requirements and opportunities.
d. Explore opportunities to encourage growth through procurement and policy change in industries critical to economic diversification, affordability, and livability including clean energy, clean technology, high-end manufacturing, and maritime.
e. Explore opportunities to manage and leverage City owned assets and existing infrastructure for economic development and diversification.

Each department shall provide recommendations to the Mayor's Office by September 15, 2027.

Section 4. Make it Easier to Open, Operate and Grow a Business in Seattle

A. The Office of Economic Development (OED) shall work with other City departments to develop strategies to improve the ease with which businesses can navigate City processes. Key actions include:
    a. Evaluating and developing options for a more streamlined, centralized approach to assisting businesses with permitting in their creation and startup phase — including the potential creation of a "one-stop" approach to business permit service — that would help businesses more easily navigate City requirements to open and operate in Seattle.

b. Bringing City departments together to collaboratively identify opportunities to reduce barriers for small businesses to launch and operate.

c. Identifying opportunities to help fill commercial spaces that have extended vacancies with brick-and-mortar businesses critical to Seattle's livability, including childcare.

d. Incorporating affordability considerations into proposed updates to the local Seattle Building Code and related regulatory changes.

OED shall coordinate with the Small Business Work Group, which is composed of staff from the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, Seattle Fire Department, Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle City Light, Department of Neighborhoods, Seattle Department of Transportation, and Public Health – Seattle & King County, in developing these strategies.

OED shall deliver the proposal to the Mayor's Office by May 1, 2027 to inform the 2028 budget making process.

B. The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI), in consultation with stakeholders and relevant departments, shall develop pathways for expedited permitting for:

a. Businesses in industries critical to affordability that themselves typically operate on low margins, including childcare centers.

b. Businesses in the key sectors identified by the Task Force or Seattle Strategic Initiatives Fund that will employ a significant number of residents on site.

SDCI shall deliver a proposal for expedited permitting to the Mayor's Office by May 1, 2027.

Questions about the implementation of this Executive Order should be directed to Lynda Petersen, Executive Operations Manager.

Dated this 9th day of September 2026.

Katie B. Wilson

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Mayor of Seattle