

Cultural Strategies for Downtown Revitalization:

An Action Plan for Recovery



ABSTRACT

Between the COVID-19 pandemic and longer-term changes in commercial retail activity, the primary economy and culture of Seattle’s downtown core has shifted and civic leaders are seeking lasting strategies to mitigate negative elements, rejuvenate the downtown economy, and reimagine the downtown community and identity. This report is the result of a ten-month project that explores how the cultural sectors and creative industries can provide strategies for downtown recovery, along with a core vision to be shared between a growing coalition of stakeholders from throughout the city and region.

While it follows and builds upon the work of the 2023 Seattle Downtown Activation Plan, this report considers a slightly broader frame, addressing both a more elevated vision as well as a wider geographic footprint.

The core vision expressed herein recommends centering culture and creativity as the overall direction for downtown Seattle by forming a cross-sector coalition, establishing the downtown areas as a formal creative district, developing coordinated planning and policy for the regional sector with downtown at the core, building programmatic and infrastructural interventions in targeted downtown locations, and establishing a new civic narrative that publicly elevates the role and value of arts, culture, and creativity in Seattle’s history and identity.

CREDITS

Third Way Team

Randy Engstrom
Andy Fife
Vi Nguyen

Graphic Design

Jeff Lawrence

Seattle Office of Economic Development

Markham McIntyre, Director
James Miles, Creative Economy Manager

[A full list of participating contributors is available below.](#)



Cultural Strategies for Downtown Revitalization:

An Action Plan for Recovery

City of Seattle

September 12, 2024



Prepared by
Third Way Creative
www.thirdwaycreative.com

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
VISION	5
GOALS & STRATEGIES	5
INTRODUCTION	7
Context	8
Project Overview and Findings	9
VISION	11
GOAL 1: SENSE OF ALIGNMENT	12
Strategy 1.1 - Cross-sector Core Partnership	14
Strategy 1.2 - Broad & Inclusive Coalition	14
Strategy 1.3 - Seattle Innovation Zone: a new Creative District	16
Strategy 1.4 - Programmatic Engagement & Resources	17
Strategy 1.5 - Coordinated & Aligned Planning & Capacity	17
GOAL 2: SENSE OF BELONGING	19
Strategy 2.1 - Cultivate a Civic Narrative with a Visible Brand & Clear Identity	21
Strategy 2.2 - Bright Spots Storytelling Campaign	21
Strategy 2.3 - Public Participation and Support	22
Strategy 2.4 - Cultural Frontline for Crisis Intervention, Public Safety and Public Health	23
GOAL 3: SENSE OF VIBRANCY	25
Strategy 3.1 - Street-level Activity	26
Strategy 3.2 - Tentpole Attractions	27
Strategy 3.3 - Collaborative Programming & Marketing	29
Strategy 3.4 - Novel Solutions for Audience Development	30
GOAL 4: SENSE OF PLACE	31
Strategy 4.1 - District-wide Developments for the Seattle Innovation Zone	32
Strategy 4.2 - Hyper-local Placemaking Toolkit	33
Strategy 4.3 - Nodes: Clusters and districts	34
Strategy 4.4 - Corridors: Routes and Pathways	35
Strategy 4.5 - Increase Capacity for Cultural and Creative Space Development	35
Strategy 4.6 - Sector Hubs	36
GOAL 5: SENSE OF PROSPERITY	37
Strategy 5.1 - Master Planning for the Local Creative Industry and Cultural Sectors	38
Strategy 5.2 - Creative Finance & Funding Priorities	39
Strategy 5.3 - Coordinated Creative Workforce Development Efforts	40
Strategy 5.4 - Pipelines for Interactive Media & Technology	41
Strategy 5.5 - New Business Models for the Arts	42
CONCLUSION	43
PARTICIPANTS	45
REFERENCES & RESOURCES	47



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between the COVID-19 pandemic and longer-term changes in commercial retail activity, the primary economy and culture of the urban core has shifted. Like many other cities around the world and especially along the west coast of North America, Seattle is seeking lasting strategies to not just mitigate negative elements, but to rejuvenate and reimagine the downtown core.

This report is the result of a ten-month project that explores how the cultural sectors and creative industries can provide strategies for downtown recovery, along with a core vision to be shared between a growing coalition of stakeholders from throughout the city and region.

While it follows and builds upon the work of the 2023 [Downtown Activation Plan](#), this report considers a slightly broader frame, addressing both a more elevated vision as well as a wider geographic footprint. It looks at the areas from Seattle Center and Lake Union Park in the north to the Stadium District in the south, and from the Seattle Waterfront east to the Washington State Convention Center and Interstate 5. In this way, it includes a number of international scale cultural venues and a more comprehensive swath of the creative sector, from global institutions to the hyper-local.

This report recommends centering culture and creativity as the overall direction for downtown Seattle by forming a cross-sector coalition, establishing a formal overlay of the downtown area, developing coordinated planning and policy for the sector, building programmatic and infrastructural interventions in targeted locations, and establishing a new civic narrative that elevates the role and value of arts, culture and creativity in Seattle's history and identity.

VISION

The greater Puget Sound will become known throughout the world as the capital of creativity and innovation, with downtown Seattle at the core. It will be a place of discovery, play, innovation, participation, community, compassion, meaning, and growth.

Downtown Seattle will be accessible and compelling for all ages and inclusive, equitable and meaningful to a wide spectrum of cultures and identities. It will be a home and a workplace for artists as well as cultural and creative workers from all over the region and all around the world.

GOALS & STRATEGIES

In order to build towards the vision described above, the following interlocking goals and strategies are designed to build the capacity for transformative and lasting systemic change. They recommend a collective impact coalition that works towards narrative change, policy and infrastructure development, and programmatic activation. The results will be improved senses of alignment, belonging, vibrancy, place, and prosperity for downtown Seattle.



GOAL 1: SENSE OF ALIGNMENT

Build a robust and effective coalition of institutions and leaders from across key sectors and industries that work together to align resources and unify plans for downtown recovery and for the arts, culture, recreation and creative sectors within the region.

- Establish a core partnership from across sectors.
- Develop a broad and inclusive coalition of businesses and creative and civic organizations.
- Establish a formal overlay of the neighborhoods surrounding and including the downtown core dedicated to culture and the creative economy broadly.
- Provide regular and ongoing programmatic engagements and resources to the members of the coalition.
- Ensure planning, prioritization, and capacity are coordinated and aligned across core partnership and throughout the coalition membership.



GOAL 2: SENSE OF BELONGING

Bolster the senses of belonging, vibrancy, safety and resilience in and throughout downtown by building a new, highly visible civic narrative that highlights assets and invites broad public participation and support.

- Cultivate a civic narrative with a visible brand and clear identity.
- Conduct a multi-channel storytelling campaign that elevates and celebrates Seattle's bright spots.
- Provide ample avenues for public participation and support.
- Position culture and cultural workers as a frontline for public safety and public health in downtown.



GOAL 3: SENSE OF VIBRANCY

Leverage the breadth and depth of cultural and recreational activities and attractions from the region to better activate downtown while investing in new high-visibility cultural activities.

- Broadly and regularly activate the sidewalks, streets, parks, and ground floor retail with a variety of short-term programmatic activities.
- Develop an array of new “tentpole” cultural attractions by recruiting national and international enterprises while boosting select home-grown efforts.
- Organize dynamic, targeted, and selective collaborative marketing and programming initiatives for local culture.
- Invest in development of novel technologies for audience development and cultural participation.



GOAL 4: SENSE OF PLACE

Expand local placemaking toolkit to better support and guide the placement of cultural and recreational activities, producers, supporters and participants by developing infrastructure and public policy tools for deployment to select corridors, nodes and locations throughout downtown.

- Consider specific programmatic, policy and infrastructure improvements throughout the downtown areas, especially in regards to recreational transit, adaptive reuse, and creative workforce housing.
- Articulate specific nodes throughout downtown to serve as locations for the cultivation of a cluster of activity.
- Outline specific corridors through downtown to serve as specified pathways for pedestrian programming and the transportation of cultural participants.
- Build out the toolkit for hyper-local placemaking currently available through the Seattle Cultural District and Washington State Creative District programs.
- Increase capacity among local developers for building cultural and creative spaces and other infrastructure.
- Develop a series of facilities throughout downtown to serve as accessible hubs for makers within specific sub-sectors of the creative industry.



GOAL 5: SENSE OF PROSPERITY

Boost and sustain a robust creative sector with innovative and engaged cultural and creative enterprises throughout downtown by developing a holistic and inclusive set of workforce and organizational development resources, activities and infrastructure.

- Conduct a coordinated local planning process for local arts, culture, and the creative economy that results in a shared long term master plan for the region.
- Expand available finance and funding for creative enterprise by partnering with philanthropy, corporate sponsors, and private equity.
- Provide for development of the creative economy through expansion of and coordination between various local creative workforce development programs.
- Invest in professional and creative pipelines from local cultural economy to the global interactive media and other digital industries.
- Launch an initiative to explore new business and revenue models for traditional major cultural institutions, arts organizations, and music venues.

INTRODUCTION

Context

During periods of rapid change, Seattle has often relied upon the cultural and creative sectors to imagine the city's future. Today, Seattle is at another inflection point, especially downtown, where both explosive growth and complex challenges offer a clear opportunity for that to happen again. This time, culture, creativity, and innovation will be united as one whole and placed at the very center of the vision and identity for the city and region.

During the early 1950s "Boeing Boom," Seattle was navigating another period of explosive growth. In 1952, a small group of artists, architects, and academics formed the "Beer and Culture Society" to explore what the future of this growing city might look like. Two years later, after the first "Congress of the Allied Arts," a formal organization was formed. At its founding, Allied Arts represented 57 organizations and 55 prominent artists. They would go on to have a prominent role in defining the heart of the city, driving the development of the world's fair and the creation of Seattle Center. They pioneered the Seattle Arts Commission and the public art ordinance, preserved Pike Place Market, and saved historic Pioneer Square, among many other civic projects.

In 1971, under a very different set of conditions driven by Boeing, the city found itself in the most significant economic downturn of its history. The airplane manufacturer had laid off more than 50,000 employees, and a billboard went up on I-5 saying "Will the last person out of Seattle please turn out the lights." It was at this moment that Mayor Wes Uhlman chose to charter the city's first local arts agency, the Seattle Arts Commission. When asked why he would do so in the context of such perilous economic headwinds, he said "because we have to give people hope." The Arts Commission, now known as the Office of Arts & Culture, would create one of the nation's first public art programs, Bumbershoot – the first civic festival of its kind – and would be known nationally for its leadership in U.S. cultural policy to the present day.

Today, Seattle finds itself as one of America's fastest growing cities, wrestling with the lasting impacts of the pandemic and its likely permanent impact on downtown, and seeking solutions to animate a downtown that features more than 500 vacant storefronts, a growing vacancy across its many office towers, and a mixed public crisis that has spilled into the street in the forms of houselessness, fentanyl, and income inequality. As Seattle prepares to celebrate the opening of Waterfront Park, and looks towards hosting the World Cup in 2026, the city finds itself on the verge of another "world's fair moment."

The opportunity exists to once again center Seattle's creative and cultural communities to articulate a vision for the city, and advance the policy and systems change that can bring that vision to life.



Project Overview and Findings

The Cultural Strategies for Downtown Revitalization project was facilitated by the consulting studio [Third Way Creative](#) (3WC), under contract with the Seattle Office of Economic Development. The project took place in four phases over ten months, concluding in Summer 2024 with this long-term plan for transforming and advancing downtown Seattle through arts, culture, entertainment, recreation, nightlife, sports and creative industries.

The process included two rounds of internal and external stakeholder engagement and data collection, synthesis to identify key discovery themes, research into local and national information resources and case studies, and planning with a broad base of key City leadership. While the project was primarily conducted in partnership with Seattle's Office of Economic Development, key partners also included the Mayor's Office, the Office of Arts & Culture, and Seattle Center.

Overall, the consultant team gathered input from a total of 28 city staff members representing 9 departments. There were 95 external stakeholders representing 66 different organizations, including five partnered consulting firms and/or complementary planning efforts working on arts and cultural strategies in downtown Seattle. Research and document review included 96 different reports, studies, plans, articles and/or program profiles from local and national sources, as well as an extensive review of the Downtown Activation Plan and 20 existing local event listing calendars.

Discovery research, stakeholder engagement and document review yielded a series of rich preliminary discoveries that were synthesized into the following six findings.

FINDINGS

Arts Sector Instability & Disconnection

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated long-standing issues of economic viability within the arts and cultural sectors throughout the country, with challenges persisting in Seattle currently. In addition, local artists and arts organizations have been disconnected from civic discussions in recent years due to leadership transitions and changing priorities.

Scarcity-based Narratives

Downtown Seattle suffers from overly negative narratives that illustrate challenges, scarcity, and fear over the vibrancy, opportunity, identity and resilience of the area. Detroit and other cities have models for initiatives that increase local identity and positivity through celebration and appreciation.

Overabundance of Planning Efforts

An overabundance of planning and engagement threatens a loss of alignment between agencies, engagement fatigue among stakeholders, and a proliferation of unfunded novel mandates.

Complex Geography

The downtown neighborhoods are made up of a set of complex cultural and geographic contours, and an equally nuanced and dynamic framework for placemaking is required.

Many Disconnected Assets

Cultural programming of the downtown neighborhoods is characterized by a mix of potential key assets, including programmatic bright spots, underutilized resources, and unrealized opportunities.

Cultural Data Deficits

Planners, policymakers, funders, and advocates share a desire for more up-to-date, complete, aligned and connected data sets about downtown cultural institutions, leaders, activities, participation, and economic impacts.

Also among the discovery themes was a consistent level of urgency for action. With the needs and opportunities so acute, so immediate and so well explored and articulated elsewhere in complementary plans and initiatives, this project and report contains less specific diagnostic information and focuses primarily on setting direction for future action by the city as well as a constellation of other stakeholders.



VISION

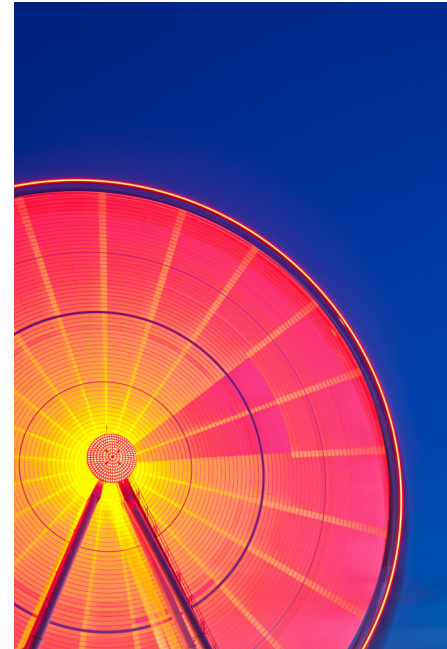
This report provides a roadmap of goals and strategies for enriching the overall identity and economy of downtown Seattle through culture, creative enterprise, sports, recreation, and the arts. It recommends culture and creativity as the driving force for the city and the region, and it explores the potential avenues for advancing the sector swiftly and effectively.

The vision at the foundation of the recommendations within this report positions the greater Puget Sound as the **leading region of creativity and innovation throughout the world, with Seattle as the capital city, and downtown as the core.**

With this vision, downtown Seattle will be a place of discovery, play, innovation, participation, community, compassion, meaning, and growth. It will be a unified campus, providing a laboratory that is accessible and compelling for all ages, and an inclusive and meaningful center for expression by a wide spectrum of cultures and identities. It will be a home and a workplace for large swaths of artists as well as cultural and creative workers, along with their endeavors and projects from all over the region and all around the world.

Through arts, culture, and creativity, downtown Seattle will become a fundamentally human-centered place; where the values of compassion, inclusivity, equity, and justice drive and are reflected visibly; where public safety entails more than just cleanliness and a lack of crime, but a deeper sense of belonging and community.

When realized, the experience of Seattle will be like a permanent world's fair, fulfilling the promises of the Century 21 Exposition with an ongoing showcase of science, futurism, commercial innovation, art and design, entertainment and expression, global diversity, discovery, and delight. The products of Seattle will continue to change and improve the world as they have for the past century, and the communities and people of Seattle, as their creators and stewards, will be prosperous and healthy.



In this vision for Seattle's future, arts, culture, and creativity serve not as the 'what' or the 'why,' but the 'how.'

**How to re-animate downtown,
How to heal from a civic trauma,
How to foster cultural and economic self determination,
How to welcome and host visitors from around the world,
How to gather and engage and work as a collective people,
How to co-create a shared future,
How to demonstrate shared values.**

GOAL 01

Sense of Alignment



Goal Statement

Build a robust and effective coalition of institutions and leaders from across key sectors and industries that work together to align resources and unify plans for downtown recovery and for the arts, culture, recreation, and creative sectors within the region.

Overview

For a new vision to drive a transformation of downtown Seattle, it will first need to be shared broadly across multiple industries, sectors, and communities. It will need mechanisms for communication, coordination, evaluation, advocacy, and leadership. It will need to work alongside and within other major development projects, and will have to rise above the traditional politics of competition and scarcity between institutions and sectors.

The vision cannot be owned or promoted by any existing entity, and it will need dedicated and structured capacity to be successful. To work, the initiative must operate as a collective impact strategy, embodied in a structure that overlays with existing institutions and geographies. Establishing a formal overlay is an option, but however it is organized, a formal structure, language, and identity will be needed by the fledgling effort, as well as a framework for developing the policy and resources for growing and then sustaining it in the long term.

Resource: Collective Impact Forum

On their website, [The Collective Impact Forum](#) defines collective impact as “a network of community members, organizations, and institutions who advance equity by learning together, aligning, and integrating their actions to achieve population and systems level change.”

They also provide a framework of five conditions for collective impact:

- **A common agenda** - coming together to collectively define the problem and create a shared vision to solve it.
- **Shared measurement** - tracking progress in the same way allowing for continuous learning and accountability.
- **Mutually reinforcing activities** - integrating the participants' many different activities to maximize the end result.
- **Continuous communications** - building trust and strengthening relationships.
- **A strong backbone** - having a team dedicated to aligning and coordinating the work of the group.

The Collective Impact Forum includes a broad set of information resources for founding and developing a collective impact initiative, which may be of use to this effort. In particular, the [Backbone Starter Guide](#) provides a guide for the role and purpose of the core leadership group, how it can be structured, and the role of funders and others in supporting it. In it, they offer six essential functions for the backbone support:

1. Guiding vision and strategy
2. Supporting aligned activities
3. Establishing shared management practices
4. Cultivating community engagement and ownership
5. Advancing policy
6. Mobilizing resources

<https://collectiveimpactforum.org/resource/backbone-starter-guide-a-summary-of-major-resources-about-the-backbone/>

Strategy 1.1

Cross-sector Core Partnership

One of the five key conditions for collective impact, as defined by the [Collective Impact Forum](#) is a strong backbone organization. The roles of the backbone organization are to guide vision and strategy, support aligned activities, establish shared management, cultivate community engagement, advance policy, and mobilize resources. They outline how any number of types of organizations can serve as the backbone for a collective impact effort, whether a funder, a new nonprofit, an existing nonprofit, a government agency, or a jointly shared leadership structure.

The backbone of downtown Seattle's new collective impact initiative will be shared, with a leadership team made up from across several key organizations and with an existing foundation or other nonprofit serving as the fiscal agent. The core group of key partners will organize and direct the gathering and deployment of time, money and other resources, aligning the contributions and participation of a multitude of other stakeholders. They will take responsibility for governance and strategy, ensuring representation of the broader coalition as it develops.

The work of this initiative will not be accomplished by meetings and discussion alone. Making significant change at scale across all of downtown Seattle will require adequate capacity and enough runway for trial, error, and iterative investment. The core team members should come to the table with significant resources to contribute, including funding, staffing capacity, operation systems, access to philanthropy and private capital, and other resources.

Even within the core partnership team itself, some person or small group of people need to take the lead and wrangle the others, working to ensure that the partners are bringing resources to the table, and securing those commitments with operating agreements and clearly spelled out expectations for the work and the costs involved.

Strategy 1.2

Broad & Inclusive Coalition

With a properly resourced and structured initial team of partners at the core (1.1), a broad and inclusive coalition of businesses, creatives, and civic organizations will be gathered and formalized, with three distinct member types:

- **Industry** - Institutions, businesses and organizations, including arts and culture, nightlife, fashion, design, architecture, film and television, interactive media, restaurants and hospitality, entertainment, professional sports.
- **Makers** - Individual makers, creative professionals, cultural workers and production workers.
- **Civic** - Civic and business and community leaders, city and regional planners, policymakers, partners

The resulting coalition will be housed and supported within an organizational framework. This framework may be provided legally and formally by either new or existing organization, but in either case a significant amount of formal startup work will be required. Throughout the rest of this document, the formal organization, the core partnership, and the overall coalition of stakeholders will be collectively referred to as "The Coalition."

Where there are competing interests, The Coalition will seek to provide some sense of mutually beneficial returns for all involved, so that the effort as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and that the benefits are shared broadly.

A system of membership dues and other kinds of member-driven revenues will be designed. Accessibility and affordability should be balanced with the need for some kind of sustaining economic engine.

Ultimately, any organization who has a stake in the success of downtown or who is part of the regional cultural or creative ecosystem should be engaged by the coalition, shown a pathway to membership, and eventually engaged as a participant and member.

Case Study - Coalition: The Beer & Culture Society and Allied Arts of Seattle

[Allied Arts Foundation](#) is currently a small, volunteer-run nonprofit organization in Seattle that supports historic preservation and arts advocacy, and provides artist grants, awards, scholarship, and fiscal sponsorship to local artist projects. As an effort that traces back more than 70 years, its impact and visibility is much more limited than it once was, though it continues a legacy that can be credited with driving the development of most, if not all of Seattle's iconic arts organizations and cultural infrastructure.

The generation and subsequent impact of Allied Arts is instructive to this plan in its successful cultivation of a lasting dynamic cross-sector coalition.

In the early 1950s, Seattle was experiencing a massive growth period. In the post-war world, Boeing began churning out commercial jets in growing quantities and bringing workers to the region in droves. The city and region were ill-equipped for its growing national and international footprint culturally and otherwise, and specifically had challenges in the downtown area.

With these challenges in mind, a small group of arts leaders and city planners began gathering for discussion of Seattle's arts and urban environment, calling themselves the "Beer & Culture Society." Within a couple years, they convened the first "Congress of the Allied Arts" in 1954, establishing Allied Arts of Seattle as a permanent advocacy

group. After a second Congress in 1955, they incorporated and formally represented 57 local arts organizations and 55 leading artists and activists.

This group and its successors can be credited with pushing for the creation of the Municipal Arts Commission, the first Cultural Master Plan, the first percent-for-art public art program, the first annual arts and music festival (eventually known as Bumbershoot), developing the world's fair, building Seattle Center and Benaroya Hall, creating the Pioneer Square Historic District, saving Pike Place Market, establishing the Seattle Design Commission, and the creation of transferable development rights, which helped preserve the Paramount, the Moore and other key cultural landmarks.

The story of Allied Arts provides a kind of blueprint for the coalition needed now. Seattle faces today a different set of challenges and will need a different set of stakeholders to gather, but a successful coalition, with a strong core vision, has the opportunity to shape the future of the city for a generation or more, much in the way the Beer & Culture Society did back in the '50s.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Seattle#Post-war_boom_1945

<https://www.alliedartsfoundation.org/>

<https://www.historylink.org/File/2212>

Strategy 1.3

Seattle Creative Core: A New Overlay

With this plan in place, a broad coalition coming together (1.2), and a strong core team as the backbone (1.1), the collective impact effort will benefit from a formal, bounded policy area, combining traits and functions from “innovation districts” and “creative districts.” Here we will use the name “Seattle Creative Core” for the new geographic overlay.

As defined by the Brookings Institute in a [2014 report](#), innovation districts are an emerging trend in urban planning focused on entrepreneurial clustering, and have been applied in places such as [Cambridge](#), [Detroit](#), and [St Louis](#). Locally, Seattle’s existing district is [South Lake Union](#). Unlike Brookings’ work to define and designate innovation districts, creative and cultural districts have less national consensus as to their definition, purpose, and structure. State and local programs exist all around the country, including in Washington and Seattle. Both of the local programs each have a long list of current and potential districts, which are focused at the hyper-local level of a single neighborhood or even sub-section of a neighborhood. (Coordination and use of local creative and cultural districts in the Creative Core is addressed further in Goal 4 below, [4.2](#) and [4.3](#))

Geographically, the Seattle Creative Core will be set up across the downtown neighborhoods, including everything from Lower Queen Anne and Lake Union Park in the north down to T-Mobile Park in the south, and from the Seattle Waterfront east to Interstate 5. It will include Lower Queen Anne, Seattle Center, Uptown, South Lake Union, Belltown, Pike Place Market, the Convention Center, the downtown business core, Pioneer Square, Chinatown-International District, and the Stadium District.

With so many micro-districts within, the Seattle Creative Core will be too large of a geographic area to work as a single cultural or creative district, as defined in the respective programs at the state and city levels. Instead, a special custom designation will be explored, with recognition and special policy designations sought across all levels of government.

As an organization, the Seattle Creative Core will be a cooperative partnership and coalition-based collective impact effort, the makeup of which is outlined above ([1.1](#), [1.2](#)).

In addition to a formal structure and a specific geographic definition, forming the Seattle Creative Core will afford policy, funding, and other programmatic opportunities, including the ability to help shape and grow the economic districting programs themselves. While the current federal [Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs](#) program doesn’t apply to Seattle and the [Washington State Innovation Partnership Zones](#) program was defunded a decade ago, a formal district may be helpful to future work with such regional and national programs, as well as the aforementioned local and state creative district programs.

In addition, the city and state may consider further overlays within the overall Creative Core footprint, establishing yet more cultural and creative districts at the hyper-local level along prescribed nodes and corridors, as described below in Goal 4 below ([4.2](#) and [4.3](#)).



Strategy 1.4

Programmatic Engagement & Resources

Once a leadership core is established ([1.1](#)), a coalition is formed and growing ([1.2](#)), and an overlay is explored as the formal structure ([1.3](#)), the initiative will establish a series of programmatic resources and events.

Through the Seattle Office of Economic Development, with the newly reintroduced creative industry networking events ([MXR:SEA](#)), efforts are already underway to convene regular events for the creative community broadly. Convening further events will offer continued chances for learning, growth, connection, networking, professional development, data collection, and further development of the Coalition.

Beyond the MXR:SEA networking events, additional programmatic activity should serve to connect coalition members, identify ways to contribute and participate, engage coalition members and other community participants, and advance research and data collection for the sector.

Some potential activities to consider include the following:

- Larger and longer convening events, potentially including an annual or biennial conference or convention
- Regular production and publishing of digital media, including an email newsletter, website blog, and social media content
- Academic and economic research surveys, studies and publications

Strategy 1.5

Coordinated & Aligned Planning & Capacity

Among the findings for this report was an overabundance of planning efforts, resulting in planning fatigue, competing priorities, and confusion regarding alignment and leadership downtown and across sectors. A successful collective impact coalition will not only gather and centralize resources and activities inwardly, but will help to distribute and share priorities and resources throughout its network. It will work to coordinate strategy across organizations and sectors with shared planning activities and the development of deliberately aligned capacity.

The backbone organization for the Seattle Creative Core will participate in planning throughout the area, coordinating across institutions with the objective of alignment, complementary priorities, and coordinated capacity-building across related efforts.

As described in [Goal 5](#) below, this includes at least a strong collaboration between any local cultural sector and creative industry master planning. However, it also includes the need for alignment and coordination between any cultural and creative sector planning with City and County Comprehensive Planning, as well as neighborhood-level, regional, and state-level planning for transportation, infrastructure, and economic development.

Case Study - Cultural & Creative Master Planning: Oakland Cultural Plan

The City of Oakland, California released a new cultural master plan in 2018: [Belonging in Oakland: A Cultural Development Plan](#).

While many municipal cultural plans tend to consider art and arts organizations as the primary focus and driver of cultural policy and programs, the Oakland plan is notable for its focus on people and belonging broadly, and seeing culture and the arts as the medium by which the means of expression and sense of belonging can be intentionally and effectively shared broadly and equitably across a broad diversity of communities.



As Cultural Affairs Manager Roberto Bedoya says in his preface, “The tagline for the plan ‘Equity is the Driving Force, Culture is the Frame, and Belonging is the Goal’ operates as a guide to how we developed the plan. We focused on how Oaklanders realize their expressive life, a term coined by Bill Ivey the former Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, who states, ‘Expressive Life is composed of elements – relationship, memory, aspiration, belief’ – which enliven community and creativity.”

The Oakland plan was the result of a community-based process. Beginning with several months of research and discovery, the project developed a comprehensive asset map showing 13 layers of cultural assets.

The project then moved on to several more months of community engagement, then to synthesis of shared needs and priorities, and the development of a new vision and plan, and then finally the plan’s ratification.

While the process is not unlike other cultural planning, the results are exemplary. Oakland’s plan sets a new and relevant cultural vision for the city, a redefinition of the role for the Cultural Affairs Department within the city government, and a specific two-phase plan for fulfilling the vision that considers the following:

- Retention and expansion in cultural space,
- Preservation and advancement in neighborhood-level sense of place and vitality,
- Sustainability and growth to the civic cultural commons,
- Cultivation of the overall cultural ecosystem, and
- Targeted investment in equitable cultural infrastructure

Seattle needs a new cultural plan that spells out vision and direction for the cultural and creative industries broadly. While the needs and opportunities in Seattle may demand a different process and outcome from Oakland, two things remain similar. Firstly, Seattle needs to develop a new and different definition for cultural planning, and not rely on models from the past locally or elsewhere. Secondly, the opportunity in new planning models is to move past culture as a lens for comfort, status, and visibility, and instead to examine cultural plans and policies as a vehicle for belonging, health, vibrancy, and the opportunity for self-determination and expression by all peoples and communities.

Arts, culture, recreation, humanities, and sports provide a venue for the very core principles of equity, justice, and democracy. Seattle deserves a cultural plan with the ambition and broad inclusivity evident in Oakland’s.

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/cultural-plan>

GOAL 02

Sense of Belonging



Goal Statement

Bolster the senses of belonging, vibrancy, safety, and resilience in and throughout downtown by building a new, highly visible civic narrative that highlights assets and invites broad public participation and support.

Overview

A year before the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered Seattle along with the rest of the world, KOMO aired a news special entitled “[Seattle is Dying](#),” which got more than 4 million views online within just a few months. It attracted a broad range of both criticism and appreciation, and was covered in other media outlets internationally. Whether its assertions were correct or incorrect, the widely viewed editorial video successfully constructed a narrative about an ailing downtown retail economy, and connected it to the twin crises of homelessness and addiction.

While the “Seattle-is-dying” narrative isn’t the only story about downtown Seattle, and is far from universally accepted or adopted, it continues to dominate for lack of any prevailing alternative.

In order to change that, the Coalition will cultivate a new civic narrative, transforming the public perspective on downtown Seattle through investment in storytelling, visibility, engagement, and empowerment. It will develop a brand and message platform that is based on the vision outlined above, centering innovation and creativity as the core of Seattle’s identity, culture and economy.

That brand will be used for a campaign that extends the Coalition beyond the creative sector to the public at large. The campaign will be responsive, inclusive, and participatory, providing clear opportunities for the general public to feel like they are the source and the driver of the change, boosting civic pride, and providing direction to civic participation.

The content of the campaign will focus on and elevate bright spots from Seattle’s history and culture, that exemplify the city’s core values and qualities. Some related efforts to connect, model, and/or possibly incorporate include The [Greater Seattle Compact for Belonging](#), the Seattle Chamber of Connection, as well as DSA’s [Love, Seatown](#) and Visit Seattle’s 2018 Film Series [Dear Seattle](#).

Resource - The Power of Story: Narrative, History and Civic Identity

In Helen Haste’s and Angela Bermudez’s 2016 book *International Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, Chapter 23 is entitled “[The Power of Story: Narrative, History and Civic Identity](#).” It expands the concept of civic action beyond conventional participation in electoral politics, matching well the style and tenor of Seattle’s civic models.

The chapter goes on to explore the role of narrative in the construction of civic culture and identities. In it, they provide a few definitions of civic narrative:

“Narratives carry and frame the cultural stories we draw upon to make sense, to create identity, and to define boundaries and alliances.”

“Narratives are a cultural resource of information and explanations that may justify, legitimize, or undermine current conditions. They give a coherence: a casual relationship between past and present, and a projection of possible futures that may either perpetuate or change those conditions. They support, or not, the empowerment of groups or categories of people so in times of social change, such

narratives that sustain identity and efficacy valorize the qualities required of those who will be the future empowerers. Heroes model versions of past figures but are recast to meet the demands of the current world.”

Perhaps, like this report recommends in developing a civic narrative and a bright spots storytelling campaign, this chapter suggests that it is time to re-examine and recast the heroes of Seattle.

Haste and Bermudez also pose five factors to

consider when examining or constructing civic narratives:

- Narratives position and define “us” and “them.”
- Narratives describe and explain processes of transformation and continuity.
- Narratives tell stories about individual and collective agency.
- Narratives characterize individuals and groups and attribute identities to them.
- Narratives establish connections between past-present-future, as well as between individual-community.

Strategy 2.1

Civic Narrative with a Visible Brand & Clear Identity

The Coalition described in [Goal 1](#) will explore a foundational new civic narrative for Seattle that positions the region, and especially the downtown core as the capital of innovation and creativity in the world. It will develop a brand, an identity, and a message platform that can be used universally by the greater collection of stakeholders to represent the best of Seattle.

In the same way that I♥NY is open to use and interpretation, the Coalition brand should be open to the user. In the same way that the [Seahawks 12th Man Flag](#) serves as a banner under which all fans and supporters can gather, identify themselves, and see themselves as a participant in the team, the narrative and brand identity for the Coalition should be unique, recognizable, and easy to obtain and display with pride.

It will express some fundamental values of Seattle, including authenticity, uniqueness, creativity, ingenuity, compassion, collectivism, sustainability, intelligence, wit, and quirkiness.

Strategy 2.2

Bright Spots Storytelling Campaign

In response to similar narrative challenges regarding downtown Portland, the Portland Mercury ran a series in both 2023 and 2024 to highlight positive stories and elevate messages of civic pride and enthusiasm. “[Say Nice Things About Portland](#)” is based on another famous campaign to change civic narratives, but the previous one was in the latter decades of the 20th century, and concerned the city of Detroit (see [case study](#)). Both of these efforts provide a potential model for Seattle.

With a fundamental core brand identity to house it ([2.1](#)), the Coalition will pioneer a multi-channel storytelling campaign that actively works to shift the civic narrative about downtown Seattle by elevating

and celebrating Seattle's bright spots. Submissions will be solicited from key figures, produced in partnership with key cultural producers, published in partnership with key media partners, and distributed across a variety of channels with the participation of prominent broadcasters, publishers, social media influencers, community organizations, and civic leaders.

Additional opportunities should be sought to highlight bright spots and celebrate local heroes, like the [sports figure murals on the monorail uprights](#) installed in the preparation for the MLB All Star Game in 2023.

While this report does address the idea of cultural listings, promotions and recommendations ([Goal 3](#)), it is important to note that the narrative change campaign is not a platform for marketing cultural transactions, but instead an engine for message delivery, for appreciation, and for positivity about this place and its peoples.



Strategy 2.3

Public Participation & Support

Once the brand is developed ([2.1](#)) and the bright spots storytelling campaign is designed and launched ([2.2](#)), the Coalition will provide ample avenues for public participation and support.

The public will be invited to contribute to the narrative change campaign, so that their suggested highlights and stories about Seattle appear next to those submitted by local celebrities and other luminaries in the major channels and feeds.

In addition, a hashtag or series of hashtags will be used to create unmoderated lanes for participation on social media, with efforts from the main campaign focused on the promotion of the hashtags' use.

The brand will be purposefully shared in wearable formats on bumper stickers, laptop stickers, hoodies, t-shirts, patches, pins, and others. And the public will be invited to formally join and support the Coalition through membership, donation, and merchandise purchase.

Strategy 2.4

Cultural Frontline for Crisis Intervention, Public Safety & Health

As the broader public narrative is addressed in the brand and campaign work above, another key element in the work towards belonging and civic narrative is in providing a sense of agency to the artists, creative, cultural, production, and hospitality workers whose lives and work regularly intersect with the street-level crises of homelessness, addiction, and mental health.

Hopefully there will come a day when there are adequate services and infrastructure to limit the negative impacts. However, for the foreseeable future, cultural workers are often positioned already as a kind of frontline for crisis intervention. Acknowledging this dynamic and preparing those workers with tools, training, and other resources that better equip them for these interactions and experiences will lead to better outcomes for everyone.

With these objectives in mind, the initiative will work with service providers, such as [CIT International](#), the [Crisis Prevention Institute](#) or the [National Council for Mental Wellbeing](#) to offer discounted or free access to existing trainings, promoting these opportunities broadly to arts, culture, entertainment, hospitality, sports and production organizations and workers who engage regularly with the public, especially downtown. Furthermore, the city and the Coalition will consider not just covering the cost for the trainings, but paying the participants direct compensation for their time and energy.

Over time, the initiative and the city will develop and provide a greater centralized system of information resources for non-emergency participation in crisis management. They will develop and offer specialized training and consulting programs for downtown retail and cultural businesses to better prepare them for crisis intervention, incident response, and emergency management. And further, the initiative will work to share this sense of agency and participation by providing an array of individual learning and volunteering opportunities for the public.



Case Study - Narrative Change: Say Nice Things...

In 1974, there were 714 homicides in Detroit, Michigan and it was named “murder capital of the world.” That same year, Emily Gail opened a shop that sold jewelry, clothing, art, ice cream, and food. She, like others, was unhappy with the lack of foot traffic downtown and the chilling effect of all the negative narratives.

As a proud Detroiter and lifelong civic booster, she wanted to send up positive stories about Detroit and coined the phrase, “Say nice things about Detroit.” She put the phrase on t-shirts, bumper stickers, pins, and even flew a plane with a banner. She organized fun runs and block parties outside her shop.

The effort became very popular and is credited with helping to turn the tide on Detroit’s image overall. It attracted new retail business to the neighborhood and got national media attention. Other Detroit brands and businesses began to adopt the phrase and attitude of Emily’s effort and instead of trying to contain and control it as a brand and a product, she would encourage participation and adoption by others.

As she herself put it, “the whole point of ‘Say nice things about Detroit’ is that wherever you live, work and play, if you like the city then say nice things about it. We can all be ambassadors.”

In 2023, concerned about similar trends in downtown Portland, the Portland Mercury looked to inspire stories from civic boosters in their city as well, launching a campaign with t-shirts and stickers, all while publishing a series of stories highlighting the bright spots in downtown Portland. While it didn’t remove the negative burdens in their city, it elevated the positive assets alongside them.



<https://www.portlandmercury.com/say-nice-things-about-portland/2023/05/17/46509660/say-nice-things-about-portland-a-manifesto>

<https://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20150826/NEWS/150829890/say-nice-things-about-detroit-creator-helps-carry-on-message>

GOAL 03

Sense of Vibrancy



Goal Statement

Leverage the breadth and depth of cultural and recreational activities and attractions from the region to better activate downtown while investing in new high-visibility cultural activities.

Overview

There are certain urban districts that are renowned for the density of unique creative experiences available. On Austin's Sixth Street, on Beale Street in Memphis, in NOLA's French Quarter, and in London's West End, one can enter with or without a destination in mind and spend an entire afternoon or evening bouncing from one curious discovery to the next. In each of these, there are art galleries, clothing boutiques, music and performance venues, cafes, street vendors, buskers, curiosity shops, and a constant stream of charismatic characters and encounters at all hours of the day and night.

Building a cultural economy that provides a sustaining, consistent, and dense variety of experiences throughout downtown Seattle will take time. It will require directed investment in specific areas and activities. It will require infrastructure and policy change. It will require a change in the habits of funders, sponsors, donors, and patrons. And it will require a clear and aligned set of priorities for the locations and kinds of activities to cultivate and promote.

This initiative will advocate for a wide portfolio of support for everything from local, quirky street level experiences up to globally recognized tentpole attractions. Historically, Seattle has already suffered from a lack of coherent and aligned cultural marketing for both visitors and residents. As the breadth, depth, and quantity of experiences increases, more deliberate and direct promotional efforts are required that clearly curate our regional offerings for the tastes and perspectives of long distance guests, regional visitors, and residents.

In the long term, a decade from now and beyond, the downtown neighborhoods will be full of experiences, with an organic ecology and economy of activity both day and night. In the short term however, the next two years offer a number of opportunities to showcase Seattle for the globe, including especially the opening of Waterfront Park in 2025 into the World Cup events in 2026. Seattle will meet this world's fair moment by intentionally and directly investing in programmatic activations for the downtown streets, sidewalks, parks, plazas, and ground-floor retail during this time.

Strategy 3.1

Street-Level Activity

The primary strategy for making the streets feel full and activated is direct programming. Between efforts that fill empty storefronts with creative enterprise and that put cultural experiences directly in the streets, Seattle will broadly and regularly activate the sidewalks, streets, parks, and ground-floor retail with a variety of short-term programmatic activities.

Outlined in the [2020-2025 Special Events Vision and Strategy](#), the city will transform the public realm (especially in downtown) into a large campus of activated outdoor cultural venues. With a stronger special events program, Seattle will use parades, festivals, and other special events to more actively fill the streets and parks downtown with both daily cultural programming and regular unique large-scale events.

Otherwise, as identified in the 2023 Downtown Activation Plan and more recently explored at the state level through the [Soul of a Building Report](#), vacant storefronts pose a unique, important, and growing opportunity for activation. Both [Storefronts](#) and [Seattle Restored](#) have proven their ability to make significant differences in the spaces they inhabit. However, neither program at current scale comes close to addressing the growing vacancy numbers. Both of these short-term storefront activation programs will be scaled up by an order of magnitude to activate more spaces in more buildings, and with a broader range of activities.

While these essential programs are being transformed and expanded, Seattle will also take direct and deliberate steps to take advantage of the world's fair moment by assembling a programmatic partnership that works to identify and activate all of the street-level programming opportunities throughout downtown.

Strategy 3.2

Tentpole Attractions

Seattle will actively develop a handful of new tentpole cultural attractions, both by recruiting national and international enterprises, and by boosting select local efforts. Particular effort will be put in to develop the following:

- Large-scale, long-term immersive experiences similar to [Meow Wolf](#) and [Sleep No More](#)
- Large-scale, long-term performance residencies like [Cirque du Soleil](#) and [Blue Man Group](#)
- Large-scale recreation spaces like [Colorado Springs's CityROCK](#) and Oslo's [SNØ](#)
- Globally-recognized music, art, culture, and industry annual events like [Austin's SXSW](#) and [Atlanta's A3C](#)
- International Sporting Events such as the [World Cup](#), NCAA Tournaments, and the Olympics

In order to attract existing enterprises nationally and globally, local economic development stewards will be better equipped with the information and resources required to communicate Seattle's fitness. A lead agency and role will be assigned to coordinate across organizations such as Seattle's Office of Economic Development, the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA), the Sports Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, the Friends of the Waterfront, etc. This agency and role will also actively work to advance Seattle's fitness as a home for large-scale globally-recognized tentpole attractions and events through policy, infrastructure, program, and community development.

In the meantime, just as much effort and attention will be invested regionally as is invested elsewhere for the next large-scale attractions for downtown Seattle.

Local efforts with the potential for elevation will be sought and invested with growth capacity and support. Existing major cultural institutions will be supported as they pursue new programming and revenue models. Corporate sponsors and global brands located in the region will be engaged and feasibility will be assessed. Small but pioneering local efforts will be considered for elevation.

Finally, for major global events, such as the 2026 World Cup, work will be done to maximize local cultural activation, inclusion, visibility, and alignment. A special task force will be assigned to optimize the opportunity, working across the many cultural and recreational local experiences to put the region's main cultural and creative assets on the map for visitors from all over the globe, while finding ways to enliven and engage local creatives at an appropriate size and scale for the events.

Case Study - Coalition: Immersive Tent Poles: Meow Wolf Requirements Interview

Meow Wolf is the American arts and entertainment company behind four large-scale interactive and immersive art installations in Santa Fe, Denver, Houston and Las Vegas, which have attracted 10 million visitors since they opened.

In conversation with leadership at Meow Wolf about the conditions for success in new cities, they described the ideal levels of creative economy, general economic activity, tourism, and infrastructure. They matched Seattle perfectly. Meow Wolf also mentioned several similar projects that are earlier in their lifecycle who may be well positioned for a first permanent and/or long-term installation. The details of the interview follow.

What does it take for a city to attract the attention of Meow Wolf?

We've identified our formula. There needs to be a large, culturally-engaged population that will come back more than once. And we look for markets with 20 million or more tourists annually in case they don't. It's expensive, both to build and to operate so there needs to be a sustained level of interest.

What kind of space do you look for?

When Meow Wolf begins site selection, we generally look for interesting, unique places with a lot of square footage available. In Texas, we are in a mall. In Denver, it is a big facility between two overpasses. In Santa Fe, we took over an old bowling alley. And in Vegas, we share a facility with a number of other immersive experiences. That space is an interesting model, called Area15, where it serves as a destination arts and entertainment hub. For all of them, it is important that there be good transportation in and out, to get the people there to experience it. Probably all told, we utilize at least 50,000 square feet between the front- and back-of-house, but it can be a lot more. Denver is 90,000 square feet.

What does it cost and how long does it take?

The published number for the Denver installation was over \$100 Million. That was in 2021 dollars, so now probably \$130 Million. But we are scaling down the size now. Which also decreases the build time. All told, the development cycle is probably 36 months.

Where is Meow Wolf among the field of other immersive experiences?

On the very high end, you have things like Disney, Universal, Six Flags. We are the next step down from there. But there are plenty of other anchor experiences that are good, not as picky, more affordable, and more influenced by the local market. In Boston, there's an interactive and immersive gameplay center with a lot of different rooms and themed games. Some examples to consider are [Level99](#), [Timewarp](#), and [Boda Borg](#). It is a bit like an arcade with cool art and technology. That is less square footage but a high throughput. Some other examples are [Artehouse](#), [Otherworld](#), and [Moment Factory](#). You might also look at [Felix and Paul Studios](#), [Third Rail Projects](#), [Odd Duck](#), [Particle Ink](#), [The Void](#), and [13th Gate](#).

How might a city best position itself to attract a large scale immersive attraction?

I don't know of a city who has done it yet, but assigning someone specifically as a liaison to the immersive experience sector would really help. In Denver, Charlie Miller of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts founded Off Center, which hosts a national community conversation around this kind of thing at [The Next Stage Immersive Summit](#). They have helped evaluate projects for specific cities. Producers and companies are eager for this type of opportunity, but they aren't always aware of where it lies. Denver is where the industry is most likely to set up as the capital. There is a strong workforce and good real estate. But they haven't assigned a liaison yet, either.

If you want to find resources about all the immersive work out there, check out [No Proscenium](#).

Strategy 3.3

Collaborative Programming & Marketing

While strategies [3.1](#) and [3.2](#) above focus on expanding the number of cultural experiences available to the public, a lot can yet be done to leverage the current cultural and creative output within downtown Seattle through better collaborative marketing and programming.

The Coalition, along with other key partners, will organize dynamic, targeted, and selective marketing and promotions initiatives for local culture. These campaigns will be developed seasonally and revolve around a seasonal event guide that collates key events and listings from throughout downtown, showcasing highlights, building thematic connections, and inviting collaborative promotions across presenters and producers. Campaigns will include public signage, media ad buys, print and digital publications, and special events.

Further, the Coalition will invest in existing local and regional organizations and programming, especially festivals and projects that invite robust collaboration and visibility across institutions and throughout downtown, much like how SXSW and similar citywide events take place.

While everyone knows New Orleans for Mardi Gras and JazzFest, one great example of a successful local shared programming festival from NOLA is the [French Quarter Festival](#). Local examples include [Cloudbreak Music Fest](#) and the former [City Arts Festival](#).

With both collaborative marketing and collaborative programming, Seattle will have its first major opportunity to elevate and evolve the sector-wide partnerships with the 2025-2026 world's fair moment mentioned above. For the programmatic activations above ([3.1](#)) and the joint initiatives of this strategy, a central partnership of cultural presenters, producers, promoters, venues, curators, media outlets, sponsors, and funders can come together quickly and with clear purpose by organizing towards the World Cup events, and working in concert with the local organizing committee.



Strategy 3.4

Novel Solutions for Audience Development

For decades, and in cities throughout the world, efforts have been made to centralize and coordinate cultural listings into one master calendar, where one can reliably find a comprehensive engine for listing and classifying the available cultural activities.

Despite the consistency of this need and opportunity across markets, the successful examples are few and conditional. At this moment, however, Seattle has not only the need and opportunity for innovation, but the potential resources in content, programming, production, editorial, and capital.

While more traditional cultural listing promotions are accomplished in the joint marketing efforts above (3.3), Seattle is uniquely positioned to innovate one or more new tools, encouraging private capital investment in new engines for responsive, dynamic, and algorithmic cultural listings, calendaring, and recommendations.

This effort may include several interlocking elements, such as the following:

- An arts pass and membership club that is targeted for local and regional audiences that is dynamic, customizable, and responsive
- Audience concierge and curatorial services that use a combination of professional editorial capacity, direct customer service, algorithmic automation, and AI to tailor recommendations to a person, group of people, and/or organization
- New systems for cultural calendar listings that use more robust technology to also produce dynamic, custom, algorithmic, social, and responsive cultural recommendations and listings

Examples and models to draw from include the following:

- [Spotify](#), one of several major music streaming services that utilizes a mixture of algorithmic, social, and curatorial recommendations
- [5 Every Day](#), a former iOS app and daily newsletter events calendar and exploration engine that published a carefully curated list
- [IMDb](#), the online database of information related to films, television series, podcasts, home videos, video games, and streaming content online – including cast, production crew and personal biographies, plot summaries, trivia, ratings, and fan and critical reviews
- [My Favorite Things Tours](#), a previous program at Seattle Art Museum, where SAM brought some of the most opinionated, brilliant and fascinating artists, cultural producers and community figures into the galleries to discuss their favorite works of art
- [CityPass](#), a shared entry pass for tourists to access multiple cultural attractions in 16 cities all around North America



GOAL 04

Sense of Place



Goal Statement

Expand local placemaking toolkits to better support and guide the placement of cultural and recreational activities, producers, supporters, and participants by developing infrastructure and public policy tools for deployment to select corridors, nodes, and locations throughout downtown.

Overview

The Seattle Creative Core will overlay the entire downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, demarcating an extended walkable zone from the stadiums to Lake Union as a formal geographic area. Within it, specific nodes and corridors will be selected and highlighted for targeted creative development and programmatic investment.

Cultural and creative district programs exist within both the [Seattle Office of Arts & Culture](#) (ARTS) and the [Washington State Arts Commission](#) (ArtsWA), with both complementary and overlapping tools and resources for organizing and placemaking offered between them. In light of this report, Seattle's 2019 [Creative Economy Report](#), and the recent Washington State [Creative Economy Plan](#), these programs should be fully evaluated and expanded, including especially for the potential for multiple new cultural and creative districts to emerge within the footprint of the Creative Core, and for a broader range of hyper-local needs within the sub-neighborhood areas involved.

In preparing for the transformation of downtown space use, the city will invest in policy development for creative reuse, especially in using office buildings as housing. This [KUOW article](#) and this [Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections publication](#) suggest that artist studios and dwellings are not only possible, but may be the easiest and quickest transition, as artist live/work housing is the most flexible designation in the [code](#). Exploration should be made about extending the definitions and policies to additional zoning classifications throughout the footprint of downtown.

Strategy 4.1

Downtown-Wide Developments

As described above ([1.3](#)), Seattle will establish the Seattle Creative Core across the downtown neighborhoods as a new formal geographic overlay, and begin to define specific programming, policy and infrastructural improvements to be applied throughout the zone, including housing policy, transportation, and guaranteed income for artists and creatives.

One of the main elements to consider throughout the area is policy change that provides for adaptive reuse and creative workforce housing. Through code changes, conditional use, and existing commercial zoning rules [regarding artist studio/dwelling allowances](#), Seattle will create more allowances and incentives for “innovation housing.” Already identified in the South Downtown upzone, defining innovation and workforce housing to include creatives, makers, and entrepreneurs will pave the way for thousands more artists living and working downtown.

Another element in the expanded footprint of downtown is transit and transportation, which have at least two potential programs to consider: the expansion of independent recreational transit and the creation of one or more circulator shuttles.

For the first, Seattle will explore the creation of allowances and incentives for independently operated creative recreational transit, such as pedicabs, art cars, and party bus shuttle vehicles, that make it

easy and fun for short hops between locations in the downtown area. Looking to [Burning Man's art cars](#) for inspiration, these vehicles would allow for a broad range of design and expression, and can make the short-hop transportation experience into a unique artform and locally-specific cultural attraction all on its own.

Secondly, while the [First Avenue Streetcar](#) may be on hold, the concept of a cultural connector can continue, where a formal circulator shuttle follows a defined route throughout the downtown areas, especially connecting key cultural and nightlife locations and experiences. In fact, without the limitation of rail-based routing, a circulator may be a stronger solution for connecting cultural destinations.

Finally, guaranteed income programs for artists have appeared throughout the country and are worth consideration as a program for downtown Seattle. Looking to pilots in [New York State](#), [St. Paul, Minnesota](#), and [San Francisco, California](#), Seattle will find models for providing unconditional, regular cash payments intended to support the basic needs of creatives, and to maintain equity and sustainability of the ecosystem for artists and creatives, especially in areas where affordability is of concern.



While this handful of potential considerations for downtown-wide elements are already identified, still more needs and opportunities will be discovered and explored as the initiative grows and develops. The Coalition and Creative Core will allow for better direction of existing resources as well as the development of future policy.

Strategy 4.2

Hyper-Local Placemaking Toolkit

While the Coalition identifies strategies to be overlaid across the whole of the Creative Core ([4.1](#)), the far greater need is to have a more comprehensive placemaking toolkit that provides customizable, dynamic, modular solutions to hyper-local corridors and nodes within that district.

Currently offered through the Seattle Office of Arts and Culture's Cultural Districts program is a toolkit for placemaking, which includes the following:

- District identification (sidewalk kiosks, street sign caps, custom crosswalk paintings, and pole banners)
- Wayfinding (mapping and branding individual buildings as cultural space)
- Busking & Plein Air Painting Support (street performers and open-air urban landscape painters)
- Art Historic Markers (historic and educational markers)
- Pop-Up Space Activation (activate vacant storefront spaces)
- Parklets (miniscule parks created in single parking spots)
- B.A.S.E. Certification ([Build Art Space Equitably](#) Certification is analogous to LEED environmental certification)
- Cultural Preservation and Landmarking (support of older buildings and the companies and arts organizations they tend to house)

The toolkit should be considered for developments and additions such as the following:

- Support for new neighborhood-level public art and artist residency programs
- Pedestrian pathways such as Market to MOHAI and Lake2Bay
- Permanent special event and festival infrastructure on designated “festival streets”
- Additional policy and program support to hyper-local special events such as block parties and culturally-specific community events
- Expanded support for localized collaborative programming such as art walks, studio tours, and street fairs and festivals
- Targeted community-led or private adaptive reuse projects
- Flexible and adaptable nightlife policies (extended liquor licenses, adjusted sound ordinances)
- Special local transit, such as party buses, art cars, or circulator shuttles
- Other solutions to be identified through continued research and assessment

Strategy 4.3

Nodes: Clusters & Districts

While district-wide strategies will be applied uniformly across the whole of downtown (4.1), placemaking will require hyper-local specificity (4.2). The Coalition and the city should work together in prioritizing where and how to apply the placemaking toolkit.

Once identified and articulated, specific nodes throughout downtown will be developed and cultivated for clusters of activity, including potentially and not limited to the following:

- South Lake Union, Lake Union Park, and MOHAI
- Seattle Center
- Tilikum Place
- Central Waterfront Park
- Pike Place Market
- Westlake Park and Westlake Center
- Washington State Convention Center
- Historic Downtown Theatre District, SAM, and Benaroya Hall
- Civic Campus (from the [King County plan](#))
- Chinatown-International District, especially around Hing Hay Park
- Pioneer Square, with especially strong opportunities in Occidental Park and surrounding the historic Grand Central Building



Strategy 4.4

Corridors: Routes & Pathways

Like with the central nodes named above (4.3), the Coalition and the city will outline specific corridors through downtown to serve as prioritized pathways for programming and development of pedestrian and transportation of cultural participants:

- [Market to MOHAI](#), especially along the [Bell Street Park](#)
- Second Avenue, especially in and through Belltown
- [Lake2Bay](#)
- First Avenue, especially between Bell Street and Pioneer Square
- Alaskan Way and the Waterfront Promenade
- Pike Street / Pine Street East-West Corridor
- Third Avenue from King Street to Westlake
- Fifth Avenue under the Monorail
- King Street / Jackson Street East-West Corridor

Strategy 4.5

Increased Capacity for Cultural & Creative Space Development

While policy and incentive programs for development are effective, their application is only as strong as the capacity among developers to engage and participate. Therefore, Seattle will work to increase capacity among public, private, and nonprofit developers for building cultural and creative spaces and other infrastructure.

Seattle will especially invest in and engage existing mission-driven cultural developers, such as Cultural Space Agency, Historic Seattle, and the Seattle Chinatown International District PDA in [considering the redevelopment of office buildings downtown for other uses](#).

Furthermore, the city and these partners will work together to develop training programs and information resources that support other public and private residential and commercial developers and property owners in growing their capacity, knowledge, and network for creative sector development

Finally, the Coalition will actively recruit and build one or more formal cohorts of developers and property owners who are skilled and experienced in creative and cultural development, and engage them to help iteratively build more policy, community, capacity, funding, and other incentives. The work of this cohort should be done in collaboration with ARTS and can build on the work of the recommendations within the Creation, Activation, Preservation of Cultural Space Report.

Strategy 4.6

Sector Hubs

While the rest of the strategies under [Goal 4](#) focus primarily on the experience of the public in navigating the physical and cultural landscape of downtown Seattle, the sector hubs strategy considers how the built environment can most directly and effectively help to contribute to the sector itself.

For this strategy, Seattle will build and/or expand facilities to serve as the location of hubs for specific creative sub-sectors throughout the Creative Core. Unlike the nodes and corridors above, the sector hubs will be spaces focused less on serving the general public with programming and more on supporting the individuals and entities that create and develop cultural initiatives and creative works.

Some of the sub-sectors to consider include interactive media, film and video, audio and broadcast, theater and performance, literary arts, fashion, design, architecture, food and culinary arts, music and nightlife, fine arts, and craftmaking.

These hubs may contain showcase, presentation, and/or retail space, but the main footprint would be committed to support spaces, learning spaces, equipment and studios, production resources, live-work facilities, and shared administrative resources.

Some existing and/or potential buildings to consider include:

- [Station Space](#) and [ARTS at King Street Station](#) - Youth & Community Arts
- [M5 Creative Building](#) (formerly KCTS Building) and SIFF Film Center at Seattle Center - Video & Film
- Seattle Center Armory and Grounds - Performance & Special Events
- [KEXP](#) and [The Vera Project](#) - Music & Production
- [Grand Central Building and Block](#) - Artisan/Maker/Creative Retail
- [ACT Theatre's Eagles Auditorium Building](#) - Theatre & Performance
- [Pacific Place](#) - Immersive Experience
- [Base Camp Studios](#) (formerly Bergman's Luggage) - Visual Studio & Exhibition Space
- [Cannonball Arts](#) (formerly Bed Bath and Beyond) - Visual Studio & Exhibition Space

Examples of organizations who offer this kind of service, infrastructure, and programming outside of downtown currently include Pratt Fine Arts Center, Northwest Film Forum, Photography Northwest, Equinox Studios, and Northwest Pottery Center. Any or all of these organizations should be considered as potential partners in new facilities and programs downtown.

GOAL 05

Sense of Prosperity



Goal Statement

Boost and sustain a robust creative sector with innovative and engaged cultural and creative enterprises throughout downtown, by developing a holistic and inclusive set of workforce and organizational development resources, activities, and infrastructure.

Overview

Fostering a stronger cultural and creative economy in downtown Seattle and throughout the region will reap benefits far beyond street-level activation. It will encourage a lasting and engrained culture of creativity and innovation, and provide a lasting base of creatives that can sustain and redefine the creative economy and civic narrative of Seattle for the long term.

The State of Washington recently published a strategic plan for growing and strengthening the creative economy. [Creative Washington](#) outlines a vision, values, and a strategic framework for the entire state. This report and included implementation plan structure clear strategies and metrics for evaluation and planning that can and should be followed in any local efforts, including especially the following:

- Accessible business services
- Digital equity and access
- Strategic state investment in the creative economy
- Creative districts
- Career Technical Education and career connected learning for the creative economy
- High school skills centers for the creative economy
- Creative apprenticeships
- Incentives for the creative economy

The state plan goes on to outline more specific implementation plans, which are mirrored in the following strategies. While the efforts outlined here are good first steps to bolster the industry and provide robust support to creative workers, long-term strategies will also be necessary to ensure the area remains affordable and accessible to creative workers, and that they retain clear pathways to equity ownership and ongoing economic prosperity.

Strategy 5.1

Master Planning for the Local Creative Industry & Cultural Sectors

As mentioned above ([1.5](#)), coordinating and aligning planning efforts across sectors is essential for growth and transformation. In particular, the need to develop new master planning for both the cultural sector and for the local creative economy is essential.

The last cultural sector master plan by the city was completed decades ago, and a process by the countywide public agency 4Culture in 2020 was overshadowed by COVID-19 and [the resulting plan](#) now serves more as an internal strategic plan than providing a framework for the region.

In the Seattle Office of Economic Development, a more recent effort provides a planning framework,

but is not a comprehensive master plan. [The Creative Economy Report](#) from 2019 provided a snapshot and definitions for the creative economy, and is already scheduled to receive an update later this year.

Ideally, a combined and comprehensive planning effort would begin in 2024, one that provides an overall assessment and regional framework for arts, culture, and the creative industries. It would be conducted with a research approach that is coordinated with the [Washington State Creative Economy Plan](#), and with similar national and international efforts. It would be inclusive of the various creative and cultural sub-sectors and communities. It would begin and end with a representative regional steering committee, and be informed and ratified by a broad swath of the creative sectors and communities. It would provide detailed plans, direction, vision, and strategy, not just for the city government itself, nor just for the departments within, but would provide a sense of alignment and direction for the entire sector and community.

While the findings of this process point out the challenges of too much planning, especially planning fatigue, taking time to deliberately and completely design and conduct an inclusive and comprehensive planning process for the entire sector will be worth the time, effort, resource, and energy involved.

Strategy 5.2

Creative Finance & Funding Priorities

The strategies and approaches of this plan are designed to help align priorities across all sorts of stakeholders, including especially funders. The process of sharing these priorities and partnering creatively with funders is as essential as the rest of the work.

With this plan, Seattle will expand the available finance and funding for creative enterprise through promotion and coordination with public funders, philanthropy, corporate sponsors, micro-lenders, and private equity investors.

Public funding offers a unique opportunity in Seattle at this time. In the wake of the passage of [Doors Open](#), Seattle and King County have the chance to explore the highest and best uses for historical cultural funding programs, including the future of the dedicated admission tax fund by the city and the lodging taxes at the county.

One idea for public funding may be to consider a broader range of eligible activities, extending to include events that can draw significant additional revenue and resources to the region. Looking back to the tentpole strategy (3.2) above, Seattle will consider putting some public funding aside for the development of major events and new attractions.

One example from Minnesota this year found sports advocates approaching the state government there for a [\\$6 million grant to support hosting the 2026 World Junior Hockey Tournament](#). Such sports and recreation activities have not traditionally been supported with public funds. In Minnesota, the initiative also sought corporate and philanthropic support, and the commitment from the state is being used to leverage private support.

Looking also then to philanthropy and corporate underwriting, Seattle has abundant opportunities for growing the base of funding and especially for aligning that base towards culture and creative enterprise.



One tactic may be for the team members from the city to take a more active role in guiding the role of corporate and private philanthropy. Such a model was outlined in the 2020-2025 Special Events Vision and Strategy, as based on a model within the [city of Chicago's event sponsorship program](#). There is precedent for such roles within the city. During multiple previous mayoral administrations, there have been team members specifically assigned as liaisons to both corporate and private philanthropy, especially during the swift moving reprioritizations of 2020.

The city, the county and the Coalition will consider developing more capacity for philanthropic coordination, developing a team within and across the Coalition and governments that works towards more coordinated philanthropic investment in public cultural programs and events.

Otherwise, there are a broad range of opportunities to explore and expand new funding from private capital through opportunities with arts bonds, patient capital, social benefit investment, and other novel finance models.

One example of a novel funding approach, and a model for potential additional organizations and programs is [Co-Stellar](#), a social purpose corporation that connects creative entrepreneurs and arts organizations to capital that fuels next-level growth. In addition to bridge loans, project loans, business financing, and real estate financing, they provide technical assistance in financial literacy, wraparound technical support, industry and discipline-specific cohorts for borrowers, and mentorship from industry leaders.

While coordinating the efforts of philanthropy, the Coalition will also work to promote creative and cultural enterprise to other existing private equity firms and investor cohorts locally and nationally.

Finally, the public will be invited to help fund the effort as well. By building a system for community membership across organizations and programs, the overall project will raise funds through membership fees, and will promote contributed support to the whole community and to individual programs and organizations ([3.4](#)).

Strategy 5.3

Coordinated Workforce Development Efforts

This strategy may in fact be more of a regional approach that is merely focused and applied heavily in the downtown core. As Seattle and the surrounding region pursue the vision of this plan, they will provide for the development of the creative economy through expansion of and coordination between various local creative workforce development and professional development programs.

The Coalition and city partners will work with current technical assistance service providers including Shunpike, Artist Trust, Washington SCORE, 501 Commons, Cornish College of the Arts, the Seattle

Colleges, and others to assess need and opportunity within the current landscape of technical assistance and professional development programs.

They will, together with the city and other members of the Coalition, support the expansion and development of both existing and new technical assistance and professional development programs so that the whole of the creative sector and its workforce is well supported in building careers, well connected to one another in a productive network, well guided in developing creative enterprises, and generally prosperous in living and working in the area.

Furthermore, as laid out elsewhere in the plan, the Coalition will work to develop the housing and other infrastructure required for the creative workforce, with more accessible, affordable, and appropriate residential and live-work housing. Downtown Seattle especially will consider creative workforce housing as a primary strategy for re-use of commercial real estate.

Finally, the Coalition will lead the advocacy for advanced direct investment in creatives, artists, and creative workers, including the potential for continuing and expanding programs like [Hope Corps](#), and establishing new efforts such as the guaranteed income programs outlined above in Goal 4 ([4.1](#)).

Strategy 5.4

Pipelines for AI, Interactive Media & Technology

While [5.3](#) seeks to build a broad base of workforce development and support for the creative sector, Seattle and the Coalition will also undertake a more targeted strategy, focused on better connecting local cultural communities and creative makers to the global technology industry of the region, especially connecting with interactive media and artificial intelligence.

Already today, the video game and interactive media industry is larger in the Seattle area than in any other region in the world. Considering the massive amount of creative workforce involved in the production of interactive media, including everything from musicians to voiceover actors to lighting designers to fashion designers to camera operators and graphic designers, the industry has the potential of employing and supporting a broad swath of creative workers.

However, the global video game producers located in the region are not well-connected to local creative talent and often hire from and produce major elements in other cities. Building stronger local talent pipelines will better anchor the industry here, and provide much stronger economic opportunities for local creatives.

Also, with considerable investments in AI at Microsoft and other tech companies in the region, stronger relationships can be forged with local creators to investigate how to better connect the new technologies with the creative realm, helping artists to use and interact with AI, and hopefully working to help mitigate the negative effects of its development and dissemination.

One major tactic for talent pipeline development is to invest in career connected learning in the creative industries, such as K-12 internships and career technical education at local schools. Seattle will work with Seattle Colleges, Digipen, and others to develop more high school skill centers and vocational degree programs like the [Washington Network for Innovative Careers and the Seattle Skills Center](#).

Seattle will also invest in worker retraining and reskilling programs that specifically channel into the creative industries, better connecting programs like [WorkSource](#) with interactive media and other creative sector producers.

Seattle will invest in connecting the various artists and creatives across the sectors within the creative industries more directly to the [Seattle Interactive Conference](#) and other services, convenings, and programs for and by the local sector.

Finally, Seattle and the Coalition will work to promote and collaborate to provide more residencies for mid-career fine artists and cultural workers within the local collection of global companies in the technology sector, and especially interactive media.

Strategy 5.5

New Business Models for the Arts

The major nonprofit museums and galleries; music presenters, and theater and performance producers are an essential and primary component of the local community and the downtown economy. No investments in the cultural ecology would be complete without specifically addressing the main arts and culture organizations that are and have been Seattle's primary venues for convening, celebrating, storytelling, exhibition, and discovery for decades.

Unfortunately, many if not most of these organizations are suffering from financial instability. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated long-standing issues of economic viability within the sector throughout the country, including especially Seattle. Organizations here are seeing an overall increase in costs, declines in attendance, and reductions in both corporate and individual philanthropy. Even the historically reliable business models at for-profit music venues and clubs are challenged by declining trends in alcohol sales.

Seattle, as a place of innovation, will seek solutions and models for the role and revenue structure of traditional arts and cultural institutions. The city, along with the Coalition and other key partners, will establish an initiative specifically to study the situation, and explore new business models and directions for historical cultural institutions. Funding and capacity will be dedicated to assessing the needs and opportunities for change and development among the major cultural institutions, exploring and experimenting with new business models and structures, scaling up any successful solutions, and publishing and sharing the results broadly.



CONCLUSION

Embracing a new vision for downtown Seattle has the potential to reach beyond simply activating quiet streets and spaces. The goals and strategies outlined above ask the city and region to imagine something more than the mitigation of negative perceptions. This plan looks both backwards to history and forwards towards the future for inspiration, providing a foundational new identity, purpose, and civic narrative.

This plan also offers some easy and early wins. In the next two years, Seattle will have a generational opportunity to appear on the world's stage as Waterfront Park opens in 2025 and the FIFA World Cup comes to the city in 2026. In preparation, there are any number of small but significant opportunities to prepare and showcase the best of Seattle. Existing storefront activation programs can be intensified. Parade, festival and special events in the street can be optimized and advanced. Collaborative cultural marketing and programming can be pioneered.

And later this year, when the 2019 Creative Economy Report will get an update, the capacity and understanding for supporting the sector will get an upgrade.

In this plan are some particularly exciting big opportunities for the long term. After years of dispersed and conflicting energies and priorities, the major stakeholders and sectors of Seattle will coalesce around a shared collective impact strategy. That Coalition will advance a jointly shared civic narrative, and will establish a formal and visible Creative Core. The city and region will have an articulated master plan for culture and creative economy, and the downtown neighborhoods in particular will have clear nodes and corridors for focused cultural interventions.

While the definition, benchlines, and targets for these metrics will require further examination and development within each specific strategy, some other metrics by which the success of this plan might be evaluated include the following:

- Increased cultural participation at events and venues, including number, demographic, and residence
- Increased number of local visitors to downtown, with amount of time and money spent per capita and per visit
- Increased number of non-local visitors from regional, national, and international locations, with amount of time and money spent per capita and per visit
- Increased percentage of tourists visiting for cultural purposes (rate of cultural tourism)
- Increased number and diversity of cultural events and programs
- Increased media coverage for local cultural activities, events, programs, and offerings
- Increased foot traffic along both targeted routes as well as throughout all of downtown
- Decreased vacancy rates across all property types
- Increased number and demographic diversity of creatives living and/or working in downtown Seattle
- Increased number of housing units and total square footage of residential space occupied by creative workers
- Increased number of square feet of commercial retail and office space converted to creative live/work space or other creative and cultural uses
- Improved creative output from the region, including regional works copyrighted, patented, licensed, and distributed within each sector of the creative industries
- Expanded size, diversity, and engagement level of coalition membership
- Increased and maintained diversity of participation on the Coalition core partnership

- Increased number of dollars from expanded number of contributors from both corporate and private philanthropic sources specifically for arts, culture, and creativity
- Increased capital investments in local creative and cultural enterprise
- Increased numbers of regional artists and creatives working in media, film, television, and especially the global interactive media and technology sectors
- Improved retention of artists, production, and creative workers across demographics and local geographies
- Greater wealth and prosperity (improved financial position, ownership of and/or access to capital) among artists, creatives, cultural institutions, and creative businesses
- Increased observation and reporting of new and positive narratives regarding downtown Seattle locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally
- Improved and expanded data and metrics for evaluating, reporting, and planning within the combined creative sectors



When realized, this plan will see a three-fold increase in cultural participation downtown. It will see 100,000 local visitors each day to the area. It will see 10,000 artists and creatives living and working downtown. It will see an overall increase in equity ownership and economic prosperity among artists, ensuring a long-term healthy presence in the region. And most of all, Seattle will be identified and recognized as the global capital of creativity and innovation.

PARTICIPANTS

Seattle Office of the Mayor

Tim Burgess (Deputy Mayor)
Cindy Wong (Operations Manager, PM for DAP)

Seattle Office of Economic Development

Markham McIntyre (Director)
Alicia Teel (External Deputy Director)
James Miles (Creative Economy Manager)
Chris Swenson (Film Program Manager)
Chera Amlag (Former Business Districts Advocate)
Anisa Khoshbakhtian (Technology and Creative Workforce Advisor)
Scott Plusquellec (Nightlife Business Advocate)
Domonique Meeks (Small Business Advocate)

Seattle Office of Arts & Culture

Gulgun Kayim (Director)
Amy Nguyen (Former Interim Deputy Director)
Kelly Davidson (Deputy Director)

Seattle Center

Marshall Foster (Director)
Chelsea Riddick-Most (Director of Programs and Events)
Marc Jones (Director of Marketing, Technology & Business Integration)

Seattle Department of Transportation

Greg Spotts (Director)
Liz Sheldon (Deputy Director, Executive Sponsor of DAP at SDOT)
Joel Miller (Program Development Supervisor - Public Space Management)
Alyse Nelson (Public Space Manager, Acting Division Director for Street Use)

Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

Jenifer Chao (Director)
Sam Read (Deputy Director)

Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development

Rico Quirindongo (Director)
Lauren Flemister (Former Deputy Director)
Amy Nguyen (Deputy Director)
Erica Bush (Urban Planner)
Geoff Wentlandt (Planning Manager)

Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment

Edie Gilliss (Climate Initiatives Coordinator)

Seattle Parks & Recreation

A.P. Diaz (Director)

BDS Planning

Jacqueline Robinette
Skylar Benson

Cultural CEO Roundtable

Anita Shah, SAM (Formerly at ACT Theatre)
John Holloway, Seattle Chamber Music
Katie Maltais, 5th Avenue Theatre (Formerly)
Nate Dwyer, Seattle Theatre Group

Downtown Seattle Association

Nick Jackal (Former Director of Community Relations & Organizing)
Seth Geiser (Manager of Urban Planning & Design)
Kylie Rolf (Former Vice President of Advocacy & Economic Development)

DSA Arts & Culture Taskforce

Avery Barnes, TASWIRIA
Manny Cawaling, Inspire Washington
Calandra Childers, 4Culture (Formerly at ArtsFund)
Rachael Comer, Nii Modo
Rob Crocker, Index Newspapers
Jonathan Cunningham, 4Culture
Caroline Dodge, Index Newspapers
Jeff Draeger, SAM
Nick Ferderer, Base Camp Studios
Bernie Griffin, 5th Ave Theater (Emeritus)
Jeff Herrmann, Seattle Rep
Dr. Raymond Tymas Jones, Cornish
Gabriel Lawrence-Diaz, Shunpike
Sarah Michael, SAM
Matt Midgely, Gallery ERGO
Hunter Motto, Crocodile
Chris Pink, Can Can
Line Sandsmark, Shunpike
Steven Severin, Bumbershoot (Formerly)

Kinetic West

Marc Casale (CEO)
Theresa Kouo (Consulting Manager)
Kat Marulanda (Senior Consultant)
Cat Tarvin (Senior Consultant)

One Seattle Civic Partnership

Jamila Conley, F5 (Formerly)
Michael Huang, Milli
Carey Jenkins, Substantial (Formerly)
Mark Nelson, Madrona Ventures

Philanthropy & Community Roundtable

Lara Behnert, Starbucks
Jane Broom, Microsoft Philanthropies
Amy Carter, Gates Foundation
Liz Dunn, Dunn and Hobbes LLC
Olive Goh, JPMorgan Chase
Holly Hinton, Starbucks
Amber Rose Jimenez, Paul G. Allen Family Foundation
Donna Moodie, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle
Estevan Munoz-Howard, Ktisis Capital
Anh Nguyen, Paul G. Allen Family Foundation
Vivian Phillips, Arte Noir
Ben Secord, Macklemore LLC
Jesse Simpson, Housing Development Consortium of Seattle
Hewan Teshome, Seattle Kraken
Brady Walkinshaw, University of Washington
Nancy Ward, Seattle Rep
Alesha Washington, Seattle Foundation
Girmay Zahilay, King County Council

Additional Participants

Kathleen Allen, Gage Academy of Art
Ebony Arunga, LANGSTON Seattle
Kate Becker, Office of King County Executive Dow Constantine
Alissa Bolla, Alliance for Pioneer Square
Cody Borst, Meow Wolf
Jessica Borusky, Pratt Fine Arts Center
Brock Bradley, Visit Seattle
Gary Fagin, Gage Academy of Art
Joel Feldman, SIFF
Eric Guttridge, KEXP
Shannon Halberstadt, Washington State Department of Commerce
Marcus Harrison Green, South Seattle Emerald
Lisa Howard, Alliance for Pioneer Square
Benjamin Hunter, Northwest Folklife
An Huynh, SCIDPDA
Elisheba Johnson, Wa Na Wari
Jared Jonson, SCIDPDA
Yoon Kang O'Higgins, Friends of Waterfront Seattle
Beth Knox, Seattle Sports Commission
Josh LaBelle, Seattle Theatre Group
Matt Lerner, Walk Score
Rebecca Lovell, Greater Seattle Partners
Cat Martin, Paul G. Allen Family Foundation

Alison Milliman, Philanthropist
Carey Moon
Dylan Ordoñez, Desimone Consulting Group
Terry Podgorski, Nordo / Nebula
Matt Richter, Cultural.Space
Judith Rinehart, Alliance for Pioneer Square
Kim Rorschach, SAM
Joy Shigaki, Friends of Waterfront Seattle
Kevin Sur, Artist Home
Brian Surratt, Greater Seattle Partners
Reese Tanimura, Northwest Folklife
Krishna Thiagarajan, Seattle Symphony
Margo Vasyngel, Seattle Times
Alex Webster, Seattle Sports Commission
Sharon Nyree Williams, Spectrum Dance Theatre
Cheronne Wong, Seattle Symphony
Michael Woody, Visit Seattle

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

Local & Regional Reports, Plans & Programs

[2020-2025 Special Events Vision and Strategy](#)

[Seattle's Downtown Action Plan](#)

[DSA State of the Sector: Arts & Culture as a driver in downtown Seattle's Revitalization](#)

[Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan](#)

[Seattle Stadium District Study](#)

[Seattle Streetcar/Culture Connector](#)

[Seattle Blue Ring Plan](#)

[State of Washington Creative Economy Strategic Plan Framework](#)

[City of Seattle Pole Banner Guidelines](#)

[Seattle Restored](#)

[Tip 114: Establishing an Artist's Studio/Dwelling in an Existing Building](#) from Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections Seattle Permit Tips

National Programs, Reports & Studies

[Creative Workforce Development: A New Plan Where Artists, Communities & Economies Thrive](#) from The Alliance For Media Arts & Culture

[The Death of Downtown?: Pandemic Recovery Trajectories across 62 North American Cities](#) from Institute of Governmental Studies at University of California, Berkeley

[Creative Placemaking: Recommendations from and Impact of Six Advisory Services Panels](#) from Urban Land Institute

[Chicago Event Deck 2024](#) from Corporate Partnerships Division, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs

Articles & Information Resources

[Downtown Seattle's 'zombie' office buildings could get second life as apartments under new rules](#) from KUOW

[DESC Fires Back at Unsubstantiated Accusations in 'Seattle Is Dying' Sequel](#) from The Urbanist

[The CBGB Theory: Weirdos Not Bros Will Revive Downtown](#) from Publicola

[Seattle Mayor Harrell signs new measures to revitalize downtown](#) from KIRO 7 (Oct 11, 2023)

[Breaking the 'urban doom loop': the future of downtowns is shared prosperity](#) from Brookings

['Say nice things about Detroit' creator helps carry on message from Crain's Detroit Business](#)

[Say Nice Things About Portland: A Manifesto](#) from Index Newspapers

[Seattle Makes Its Mark in the Festival Scene With a Myriad of Music Festivals Old and New](#) from Rolling Stone

[Seattle is Dying](#) KOMO News Special

[Eight Guidelines for Urban Design: Keeping Creativity at the Heart of Cities](#) from SmartCitiesDive

[Urban cultural policy and creative city making](#) by Carl Grodach

[Cultural regeneration](#) by Lia Ghilardi, from Municipal World

[Parisians are Pledging Allegiance to the 'Republic of Super Neighbors.' They Must Bring Cheese.](#) By Peter Yeung from The New York Times

[Creative Toronto: Harnessing the Economic Development Power of Arts & Culture](#)

[Exploring the Ways Arts and Culture Intersect with Public Safety](#) by Caroline Ross from Urban.org

Local Event Listings and Calendars

[Bandsintown](#)

[Belltown United](#)

[Chinatown-International District](#)

[Do206](#)

[Downtown Seattle Association](#)

[Events12 Seattle](#)

[The Evergrey](#)

[EverOut - Downtown](#)

[Love Seatown](#)

[Lumen Field](#)

[Pike Place Market](#)

[Pioneer Square](#)

[Seattle Center](#)

[Seattle Magazine](#)

[Seattle Met Magazine](#)

[Seattle Metro Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Seattle Parks & Recreation](#)

[Seattle Weekly](#)

[Together Washington](#)

[Waterfront Park](#)

