

YESLER CRESCENT PUBLIC LIFE ACTION PLAN: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

In 2019, a variety of government agencies and neighborhood stakeholders identified the opportunity to improve the public spaces in Yesler Crescent area of Pioneer Square. The Yesler Crescent Public Life Action Plan—a first of its kind for the City of Seattle—establishes an approach to public space planning with the primary focus on developing design recommendations grounded in data that measures the experience of people using the space. For this, we focused on: observing the social environment and public realm, collecting opinions of users of the spaces through intercept surveys, and discussing the spaces with neighborhood stakeholders through focus groups. This data identified key opportunities for each of these public spaces that will result in positive public life transformations in Pioneer Square.

The Seattle Department of Transportation, in partnership with Seattle Parks and Recreation, is proud to present this Public Life Action Plan to support, guide, and coordinate strategic investment decisions in the years to come.

PURPOSE OF THIS PUBLIC LIFE ACTION PLAN

- Document how the public spaces of Yesler Crescent are used and perceived, as well as how well the public realm meets human needs associated with protection, comfort, and enjoyment.
- Identify design and programming opportunities to maximize use and improve the experience of these public spaces for local public space users.
- Develop a plan of action for public agencies and private partners to fund and implement recommendations.
- Establish framework for neighborhood and district-level analysis of public spaces to be replicated in other Seattle communities with a data-informed approach to public space improvements.



Yesler Crescent is a collection of public spaces in Pioneer Square, which includes City Hall Park (Downtown Seattle's second largest green space), Prefontaine Place (a key entrance to the Sound Transit Pioneer Square light rail station), Fortson Square, and several block faces along 2nd Ave Ext S

FINDINGS

While these spaces are utilized by a diverse group of users, including a high proportion of people of color, the spaces host very few women, youth, and elderly. Data indicates there is an opportunity to make Yesler Crescent's spaces appealing to a wider set of users to reflect the area's potential to be a central, inclusive public space for the Puget Sound region.



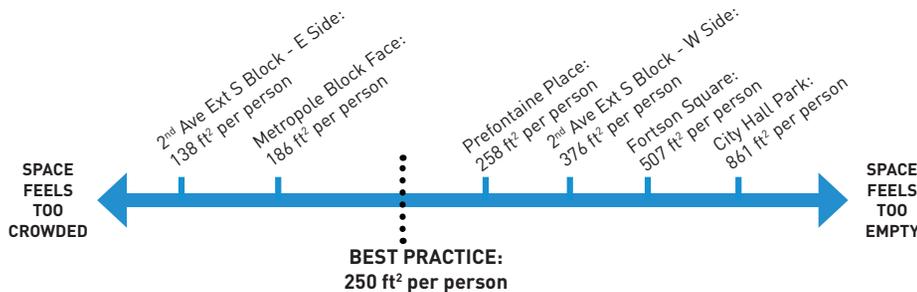
Only 26% of people hanging out were women, well below Occidental Square (61%), a nearby public space.



0% of people in these spaces were under the age of 15, and only 5% were over 65 years old.



The highest concentration of people hanging out was observed around busy transit locations, sometimes to the detriment of people moving through the area, like at Prefontaine Place. There is a lack of proportional staying activity in the area's largest public space, City Hall Park, indicating an opportunity to make it a more of a destination for the downtown area, encourage more utilization, and relieve congestion in other parts of the area.



Stakeholders reported that these public spaces lack identity and sense of place and do not function as a cohesive network of public spaces. There is an opportunity to make the spaces inviting to more people and foster connections between the spaces to optimize the area as a whole for people both moving and staying.

“There’s not a natural connection between these arc of parks. For a pedestrian who wants that access, you have to cross a four lane street with unpredictable traffic at the intersections... That’s a huge psychological barrier.”
- focus group participant

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings unearthed critical design recommendations to improve these public spaces in the interest of meeting the basic needs of current users of the space, bringing more people to the area, creating a more diverse usership in the area, and establishing a cohesive network of public spaces that are designed to optimize spaces for movement as well as for people to linger and hang out.

- **Prefontaine Place:** Investigate design solutions that promote mobility, improve sight lines, and strengthen connection with City Hall Park to encourage utilization.
- **City Hall Park:** Develop a plan to improve circulation through the park, enhance desire lines, and explore design strategies that focus on attracting people to utilize the park for a variety of uses.
- **3rd Avenue Connection:** Study operations on 3rd Avenue such as re-channelization, intersection efficiencies, and crossing improvements to improve the connection between City Hall Park and Prefontaine Place.
- **Fortson Square:** Implement plaza redesign in coordination with Chief Seattle Club redevelopment.
- **Metropole Block Face:** Add streetscape elements to improve transit user experience.
- **2nd Ave Ext S:** Add streetscape elements to improve user comfort and enjoyment, including pedestrian-scale lighting, shade opportunities, landscape buffer, and seating options.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Seattle Department of Transportation developed the [Public Life Program](#) in 2017 to collect and elevate ‘people data’ through public life studies to understand how our public spaces are being used and by whom through observational research methods. The results of a public life study provide SDOT with people-centered data to make investment decisions, evaluate designs and interventions, and understand what makes a successful public space.

Visit [our website](#) for more information about our program, this study, and to access and download the public life data.

Do you have questions? Reach us at SDOTpubliclife@seattle.gov.