

Livable South Downtown

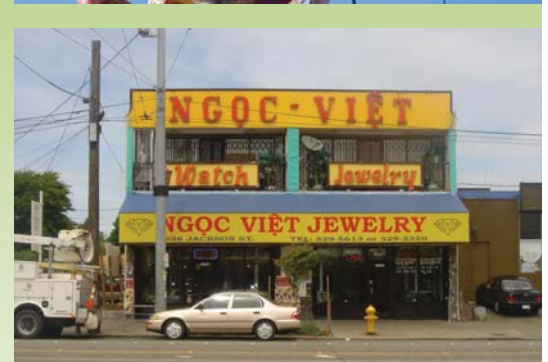
...a project of the Mayor's Center City Seattle strategy

OVERVIEW

December 2009

Building a foundation for South Downtown neighborhoods

- *Enlivening neighborhood centers*
- *Safeguarding historic resources*
- *Providing options for housing*
- *Creating economic opportunities*
- *Celebrating the area's multicultural character*
- *Enhancing public spaces*
- *Keeping people and goods moving*
- *Sustaining the environment*



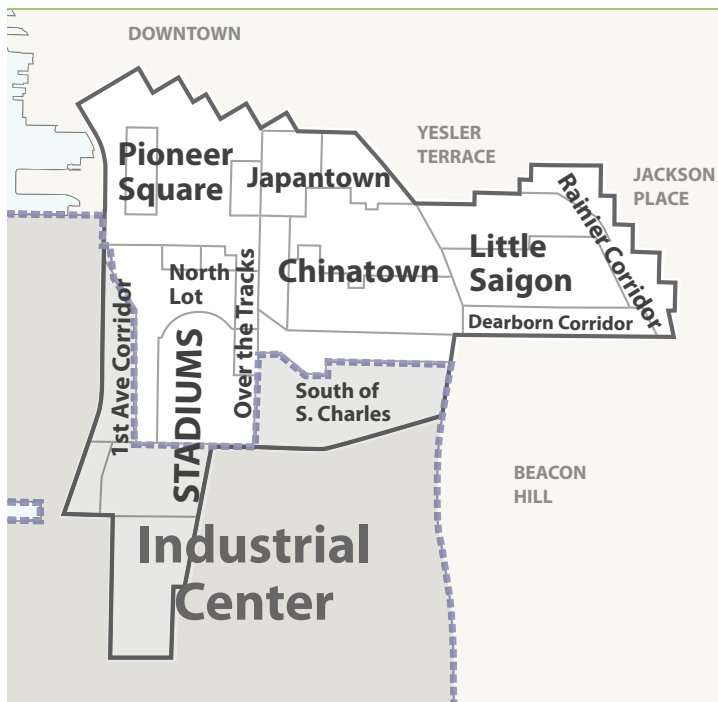


The Livable South Downtown Planning Study was initiated to study potential land use and zoning changes that will encourage investment in South Downtown neighborhoods.

South Downtown is a rich and complex geographic area of the city, home to Seattle's first neighborhoods, the region's hub for transit, diverse cultural communities, regional entertainment venues... located between the city's commercial core and major industrial center.

South Downtown neighborhoods include:

- Pioneer Square
- Chinatown/ International District
- Little Saigon and areas east of Interstate 5 within the Downtown Urban Center
- The Stadium District



Historic Union Station and King Street Station. Chinatown/ International District and Pioneer Square.

WHY HERE? WHY NOW?

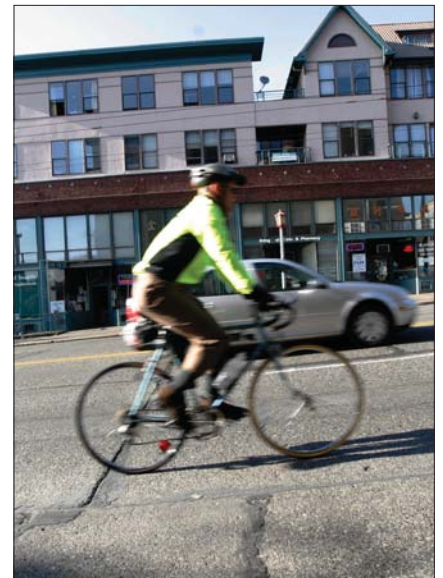
South Downtown is located at the crossroads of the region's transportation system, largely within the Downtown Urban Center. Encouraging new jobs and housing near transit and other services is an important strategy to reduce traffic congestion and encourage sustainable patterns of community growth in the region.

Over the past decade, as growth and investment has occurred throughout Seattle, South Downtown has not experienced desired new investment in housing and jobs, resulting in under-developed properties and a social environment that is sometimes challenging.

A key question for South Downtown neighborhoods and the City is: How can we encourage investment, allowing new residents and workers to enliven South Downtown, while retaining the area's history and unique character?

The South Downtown Planning Study builds-upon the vision established by both the Chinatown/International District and Pioneer Square Neighborhood Plans and Seattle's Comprehensive Plan. The planning study provided an opportunity for further community dialogue and information to meaningfully inform the Livable South Downtown Planning Study recommendations. The study included:

- Extensive public process and dialogue with neighborhood groups, business organizations, residents, property owners, employees, service agencies, and many others who have a stake in South Downtown's future;
- An assessment of economic conditions including those affecting small businesses;
- An Environmental Impact Statement that evaluated alternatives for future growth;
- An examination of transportation patterns and investments; and
- Studies of urban design considerations and urban form throughout South Downtown.





BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR SOUTH DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS: DIRECTIONS FOR LAND USE

Zoning and land use regulations provide an important foundation for future growth and development. Recommendations support the following goals in South Downtown:

A diversity of households

South Downtown’s population will increase in new and rehabilitated mixed use buildings in and near core neighborhood areas of Pioneer Square, Chinatown/International District, and Little Saigon. Additional residents will bring personal investment to neighborhoods, and will enhance public safety by providing more “eyes” on the street. Zoning changes to increase development heights and allowable densities for residential use are tailored to each neighborhood area.

- Chinatown/International District and Pioneer Square: Incentives for residential uses in renovated historic buildings and infill development between and around historic buildings
- Japantown: Opportunities for high-rise residential towers with ground-floor retail
- Little Saigon: Allowance for residential uses in a midrise mixed-use environment
- South Chinatown/International District: Increases in height for residential uses to spur new investment south of the Historic Chinatown core within the International Special Review District
- Affordable housing: Inclusion of incentive zoning programs and affordable housing TDR (transfer of development rights)



A place for new jobs

Proposed zoning in South Downtown allows for a mix of uses, with varying degrees of density for residential and non-residential uses. Proposed zoning emphasizes office uses at the edge of core neighborhood areas, allowing a transition from the Downtown Urban Center to the north, to industrial areas to the south. Future office developments will include pedestrian and open space amenities. Most new office development will be located within walking distance of light rail stations and other transit options. Commuter parking will be discouraged.

Areas where zoning would allow significant employment density include:

- Land south of S. Charles Street near the Stadium light rail station
- Areas along 1st Avenue South on the site of WOSCA warehouse
- North lot (Qwest Field) adjacent to King Street Station
- Infill development throughout South Downtown



Protect and enhance neighborhood character

The strength of South Downtown neighborhoods is their historic and cultural characteristics. Consistent with neighborhood plans, land use recommendations propose modest increases in allowable heights and densities to bring investment and vitality to core neighborhood areas through new residents, street-level retail and upper floors of buildings that are actively used. At the same time, proposed zoning carefully avoids increased pressures that could result in demolition of historic structures in the two National Register Historic Districts of Pioneer Square and Chinatown/International District.

- Retain the role of the Special Review Boards and expand their ability to review new development
- Retain existing height limits for historically-significant buildings
- Encourage an appropriate scale of new infill development around historic buildings
- Introduce South Downtown Historic Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) into South Downtown to provide resources toward rehabilitation of historic buildings
- Retain the small business character of the existing Little Saigon neighborhood commercial area through limits on the size of business uses, pedestrian design standards and incentives for residential development on upper floors of buildings



Develop sustainable community and environment

Proposed zoning will support increased residents and jobs near light rail stations and other transit hubs. Zoning will offer incentives for improvements to the public realm in order to encourage people to live near places of employment, seek services locally, and use public transit whenever possible. New development will serve environmental goals through the introduction of green roofs, landscaping and open spaces, green streets and sustainable energy systems.

- Transfer of development rights (TDR) and other incentives to encourage new open space
- LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver required for all buildings taking advantage of bonus development options
- Landscaping to improve water quality, reduce stormwater flows, and improve habitat



Safer, accessible streetscapes and public spaces

In areas where allowable residential densities will increase, green streets are proposed. Implementation of green streets will be in conjunction with future development projects as part of the incentive zoning program and as part of streetscape improvements required by the Land Use Code. Projects that use bonus development rights will have many options to create open spaces through open space TDR, neighborhood open space amenities, and the creation of green streets.





Keep freight and vehicles moving

In general, recommended zoning changes discourage future development activities that will conflict with freight and active industrial uses. No changes to zoning are proposed for the industrial area south of South Royal Brougham Way. Significant increases in zoned density and changes of use are located away from active freight corridors. Where a potential for future pedestrian activity exists, recommendations call for future street designs that focus pedestrian activity to specific locations in order to minimize conflicts between modes of travel.

Economic opportunities

Over the past decade, the City has undertaken several actions to respond to the needs of businesses in Pioneer Square, Chinatown/International District, and Little Saigon.

Most recently, the City evaluated the local economy: 1) to understand real-estate economic conditions throughout South Downtown, and 2) to understand the needs of small businesses in Chinatown/International District/Little Saigon. Land use recommendations include densities and development standards that provide economic opportunities for future development, particularly in areas where large sites, superior access to transit and potential views exist. However, these opportunities are balanced by the incentive zoning program that will direct resources to affordable housing and public amenities. Zoning recommendations are intended to help preserve small business opportunities, affordable housing and historic resources located in core neighborhood areas.



Partner to develop and preserve affordable housing

In addition to proposed land use and zoning changes, South Downtown will continue to be a focus of affordable housing as it has been for decades. Financial assistance from the City and other public agencies helped preserve many historic structures while creating housing opportunities for families, the elderly, and lower-wage workers. Strategies designed to boost production of market rate housing and add additional affordable housing will help bring new residents and enhance a healthy mix of housing types and prices:

- Strategies will continue that help preserve affordable housing created over the past 30 years
- New opportunities to renovate remaining older building with vacant upper floors will be created
- Adopted zoning changes will enable the north lot (Qwest Field) adjacent to King Street station to feature a significant number of affordable housing units
- Additional development capacity will be offered for market rate housing in return for options to provide or contribute to development of affordable housing for a arrange of moderate income levels
- New partnerships between property owners, community agencies, developers (both for-profit and non-profit) will be encouraged and supported



CITY INVESTMENT IN SOUTH DOWNTOWN

The City of Seattle has made substantial investments in South Downtown neighborhoods. Following are examples of actions and investments by City departments made in recent years.

Parks

- International District/Chinatown Community Center - Completed
- International District Community Center Expansion (exercise room added)- Completed
- Hing Hay Park expansion acquisition completed. Renovation of existing park and development of newly acquired park land - Development funded and planning underway
- Danny Woo Community Garden Improvements - Completed
- Occidental Park Improvements- Completed
- International Children's Park Playground Renovation - Planning
- Funding for seasonal performances and events in South Downtown parks

Seattle Department of Transportation

- Multiple repaving and maintenance projects throughout South Downtown
- Jackson Street- Broadway Streetcar line funded and planning underway
- Jose Rizal Bridge rehab work planning underway
- 2nd Avenue Extension/4th Ave. South seismic retrofit planning underway
- Intelligent Transportation System Corridor implementation underway
- SR 519 project underway
- Dearborn Street urban design improvements planning underway
- Work related to Alaskan Way Viaduct replacement underway
- Seawall replacement planning underway

Seattle Public Utilities

- Water infrastructure work relating to SDOT capital improvement work on 1st Ave. S.- \$4.8 million in 2009
- Water infrastructure work related to AWW replacement and seawall retrofit- \$360,000 in 2009
- Drainage infrastructure related to AWW replacement and seawall retrofit- \$382,000 in 2009
- Drainage and water infrastructure related to SR519 work- \$671,000 in 2009

Department of Planning and Development

- Assessment of Real Estate and Economic Conditions in South Downtown Neighborhoods, January 2007
- Little Saigon Public Realm Design Report, July 2008
- Little Saigon/Chinatown/International District Economic Study, May 2007
- Maynard Avenue Green Street Project, current
- ID Cultural Heritage Signage Project, current
- South Downtown Historic and Cultural Resources Report, July 2007
- Livable South Downtown Transportation Study, September 2007

Office of Economic Development

- Pioneer Square Business District Revitalization Strategy – targeted for completion in 2010.
- Chinatown/International District business area comprehensive economic development strategy to retain and grow the neighborhoods' small businesses.
- 2008 assessment of the retail health of the Chinatown/International District including small business support strategies.
- Financial support provided to the Chinatown/ID BIA for additional street cleaning
- Financial support to the Chinatown International District BIA for development of the Night Market.
- Brokered community partnerships with SCORE (Service Core of Retired Executives) to provide in-depth technical assistance to Vietnamese entrepreneurs.
- Refocused the Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and Impact Capital to create new initiatives for revitalizing Chinatown/ID and Little Saigon commercial districts.
- Funding support for King Street commercial corridor revitalization project.
- \$2 million in Section 108 loan funds and federal grant funds for rehabilitation of the Bush Hotel which leveraged over \$6.5 million in additional private investment creating at least 41 new permanent jobs.

Department of Neighborhoods

- Neighborhood Matching Fund- Since 2004, South Downtown neighborhoods have received grants totaling \$454,872 which leveraged an additional \$867,733. Sample projects include the ID/Chinatown Community Center gymnasium, the Chinatown Historic Gate, the Nihonmachi Maynard Avenue Green Street, the ID Intergenerational Leadership Program, the Japanese Heritage Project, First Avenue Median Strip Renovation, Danny Woo Garden Community Gathering Place, Pioneer Square Lighting, Chinatown/ID Night Market, International Children's Park Renovation, King Street Commercial Revitalization, Danny Woo Children's Garden planning.
- Revision of the International Special Review District Design Guidelines

Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs

- Wing Luke Asian Museum- \$1 million
- Significant 1% for the arts program funding in South Downtown
- Funding for numerous events at the Theatre Off Jackson, Panama Hotel, Larimore Project, Wing Luke Asian Museum, Chinese Information & Service Center, Li Heng Da Dance, Elliott Bay Book Company (various galleries and outdoor events)

Office of Housing

- City has funded 24 housing projects in South Downtown, both preservation and new construction, with a combined total of 1,450 units over the past several decades.
- Since its inception, the City's Seattle Homes Within Reach property tax exemption program has assisted development of 3 new projects with a combined total of 348 units. The property tax exemption helped make those projects feasible to construct.
- South Downtown Housing Inventory, July 2007
- Recently funded projects utilizing City funding include:
 - Domingo Viernes Affordable Family Apartments- \$1.6 million
 - Nihonmachi Terrace affordable family apartments- \$1.6 million
 - Tashiro/Kaplin Artist Live/Work Housing- \$1.4 million
 - Lutheran Compass Center- \$1.1 million
 - Karlstrom- \$894,000

Library

- International District/Chinatown Branch Library opened in 2005

WHAT'S NEXT

The Department of Planning and Development will present final land use and zoning recommendations to the Seattle City Council in late 2009. The City Council will conduct public hearings and ask for additional public commentary before making a final decision on the recommendations.

For More Information:

www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/South_Downtown

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