May 6, 2024

Rico Quirindongo
Director, Office of Planning & Community Development
City of Seattle
P.O. Box 94788
Seattle, WA 98124-7088

Re: Comments of Alliance for Pioneer Square on the Draft One Seattle Plan

Dear Director Quirindongo,

The following letter outlines the Alliance for Pioneer Square's (the Alliance) comments on the Draft One Seattle Plan. This letter focuses on the application of the One Seattle Plan within the Pioneer Square neighborhood.

We understand the importance of the One Seattle Plan for Pioneer Square and the City of Seattle and we expect and intend to continue to partner constructively with the City of Seattle's Office of Planning & Community Development (OPCD) and other City departments on the implementation of the One Seattle Plan and in response to our comments.

The Alliance has long sought to improve housing, the public realm, economic climate, and livability of Pioneer Square, which is an essential transportation and economic hub for the City of Seattle. After evaluating the information presented in the Draft One Seattle Plan, we urge OCPD and the City of Seattle to consider incorporating the following elements into the Final One Seattle Plan's key moves:

Preferred Alternative

The focus of the Comprehensive Plan should be economic recovery and revitalization, sustained investment, housing affordability and jobs growth. To that end, we are supportive of Alternative 5, Combined Growth Strategy, and there are a few areas where the City should go farther in a "Preferred Alternative" to achieve the City's goals. Given the economic environment and housing affordability crisis, we encourage you to consider the suggestions below to maximize growth potential that is supportive of housing and jobs creation.

Alternative 5 seeks to add the greatest amount of new housing units and zoned capacity through combined place types. The City should focus on maximizing development capacity and removing zoning barriers where the most units are likely to materialize over the next decade, in Regional Centers and Urban Centers.

Housing and Affordability: A recent study conducted in March of 2022 by MIG found that Pioneer Square has a much higher percentage of affordable and subsidized housing than the city as a whole[i]. We recommend that the Final One Seattle Plan includes land use guidance on incentivizing and promoting market-rate housing within Pioneer Square. Additional market-rate housing will create several benefits for Pioneer Square, including economic development opportunities for retailers, overall neighborhood resiliency, and diversity of housing.

Community and Neighborhoods: The Alliance for Pioneer Square's 2025 Strategic Plan[ii] notes that we support on-the-ground projects and physical improvements in the neighborhood that create vibrant spaces connected to transit, streets, and parks. In 2018, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) conducted a structural analysis of the underground areaways in Pioneer Square[iii].

This analysis highlighted critical areaway structural vulnerabilities and helped SDOT map potentially vulnerable areaways throughout the neighborhood. <u>To date, the City of Seattle has not identified a program to support the repair of Pioneer Square's underground areaways.</u> The One Seattle Plan must address the deferred maintenance of Pioneer Square's underground areaways to keep the public safe as they traverse the neighborhood. Further, in the past years the Alliance has produced a variety of plans to inform the future planning of Pioneer Square's public realm including the Jackson Hub Concept Plan[iv] (which focuses on improvements that can be made around the intersection of S. Jackson Street and Fourth Ave S.), Pioneer Square Parks and Gateways Concept Plan[v] (which presents a long range vision for all of the neighborhood's open spaces) and Pioneer Square Steet Concept Plans[vivii] (which serves as a guide for future streetscape improvements). We recommend that these plans be incorporated in to the One Seattle Plan.

Climate and Sustainability: Unreinforced masonry buildings (URMs) pose a significant threat to Pioneer Square resilience regarding climate and sustainability. The Seattle Department of Emergency Management estimates that Seattle has 1164 URMs throughout the city, with many being found in Pioneer Square. The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections' URM list as of March 2024 notes that Pioneer Square has 32 high risk buildings (buildings over three stories in poor soil areas [liquefaction and slide areas]; and buildings in the public assembly group with occupancies more than 100 people)[viii].

Right now, there are no retroactive regulations in the City of Seattle requiring owners of URMs to upgrade their buildings through seismic retrofitting. The One Seattle Plan must address the hazards of URMs throughout the City of Seattle through meaningful intervention that does not financially burden building owners. This includes the City investing in the crumbling historic areaways it legally maintains in the right of way.

Transportation: Our neighborhood serves as a gateway to the Downtown core, our ferry system, both the working industrial port and the revitalized Waterfront, and the Stadium District. The throughput of millions annually through our small, historic neighborhood means we must have efficient and effective circulation and mobility for our community residents, workers and small businesses is paramount.

Increasingly, Pioneer Square is becoming a transportation 'kit of parts', patchworked together by changes that do not consider the impacts to the neighborhood as a whole. This approach is negatively impacting our circulation and mobility network. Intentional planning to ensure the balance of needs are met for pedestrians, bikers, transit, emergency access, as well as operational and freight needs for our city is critical during this planning phase.

The OneSeattle plan must consider and acknowledge layered investments from the recently-advanced Transportation Plan, Transportation Levy projects, Light Rail investments, freight corridors and bicycle lane improvements as a whole to our neighborhood.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft One Seattle Plan. We look forward to working with the city to over time to improve not just Pioneer Square, but all of Seattle.

Sincerely,

Lisa Dixon Howard
Executive Director, Alliance for Pioneer Square

Cc: Bruce Harrell, Mayor, City of Seattle
Sara Nelson, President, Seattle City Council

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[i] https://issuu.com/pioneersquareseattle/docs/pioneer_square_district_market_study_230403_final
[ii] https://issuu.com/pioneersquareseattle/docs/your_pioneer_square_2025_strategic_plan_and_covid-
[iii] https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/areaways-program
[iv] https://issuu.com/pioneersquareseattle/docs/190328_jackson_hub_final_document
[v] https://issuu.com/pioneersquareseattle/docs/160411_parks_and_gateways_final
[vi] https://issuu.com/pioneersquareseattle/docs/150831pioneer_square_document_psqal
[vii] https://issuu.com/pioneersquareseattle/docs/streetscape_concept_plan
[viii] https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/SDCI/Codes/ChangesToCodes/UnreinforcedMasonry/ConfirmedURMList.pdf

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