



Historic South Downtown

Strategic Preservation & Development Plan 2024-2027

Who We Are

Historic South Downtown (HSD) is a Community Preservation and Development Authority created in 2007 to elevate the voices of the people living and working in the Pioneer Square (PSQ) and Chinatown International District (CID) neighborhoods in South Downtown Seattle. We fulfill our mission by investing in community projects and advocating for policies that center on neighborhood self-determination.

We are led by a 13-member board drawn from community members who bring experiences from the neighborhoods' residents, businesses, non-profit, arts and theater, culture and history, planning, and government sectors.

HSD employs 3 full-time and 1 part-time staff who bring expertise in community preservation, economic development, small business sustainability, policy, legislative advocacy, and grant-making.

Mission, Vision, Values

Mission

Historic South Downtown is a state-created organization that preserves, restores, and promotes the health, safety, and cultural identity of Seattle's Pioneer Square and Chinatown International District neighborhoods.

Vision

A healthy and resilient historic Pioneer Square and Chinatown International District in Seattle, Washington, is central to understanding the nature and character of the Pacific Northwest.

Values

Historic South Downtown practices the following values throughout the organization:

1. Equity. Our work will support mitigation of historic racial and social inequity and model equity in our work and impact. In the community investment and grantmaking context,

equity means providing what is needed to those who need it most in ways that work for them.

2. Neighborhood Self-determination. We advocate for Chinatown International District and Pioneer Square to exercise self-determination with regards to their character, future, priorities, needs, and wants.

3. Continuous Learning. Our work is rooted in examining and understanding history and remaining responsive to our changing neighborhoods and our evolving understanding of the issues and dynamics affecting them. We believe in trying and learning.

4. Accountability. We act transparently and maximize the potential of our assets to benefit our community.

5. Resiliency. We respond to opportunities and threats while maintaining mission focus and centering community voices.

Historic South Downtown's Work

Historic South Downtown carries out its mission in partnership with local organizations and individuals through advocacy and community investment.

Historic South Downtown directs its advocacy resources and invests funding by grant or contract in projects that serve our communities. Our mechanism for identifying specific investments, in keeping with our Values, is to continually engage community voices to identify areas of emergent concerns, promising project proposals, and opportunities to increase capacity to support the community in solving its own problems and growing its own opportunities.

The first line of engagement with community voices is through the Historic South Downtown Board of Directors, as constituted under RCW 43.167.010(3). The Board of Directors focuses and refines staff work throughout each year and each strategic planning period. From time to time, the Board directs staff to engage with community to gain further insight into current and emerging concerns and opportunities. Independent community members are also recruited to review and recommend funding for grant applications and may be utilized to direct future investment areas.

Planning Methods

This three-year strategic preservation and development plan is mandated under RCW 43.167.030(2) and replaces the [2021-24 Strategic Plan](#).

Beginning in March 2023, the Board of Directors and Staff collaborated on the development of this updated strategic preservation and development plan. To assess avenues for community collaboration and to build awareness among community-based organizations working to restore and promote the health, safety, and economic well-being of South Downtown, and preserve its cultural and historical identity, Board and Staff conducted a review of potential and current partners and areas of interest. Concurrently, the Board and Staff entered into an adapted SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Responsibilities/Results/ Accountability) strategic planning inquiry, through group activities, self-assessment, and dialogue.

In addition, the Board and Staff reviewed historical and current planning tools and studies to validate and update community priorities. Specifically, Historic South Downtown reviewed its own [2019 South Downtown Community Priorities Study](#), a preliminary draft of the CID Visioning Advisory Group's 10-year Implementation Plan, and the Alliance for Pioneer Square's [2025 Strategic Plan](#). See, [Priorities Development](#).

Finally, in May 2024, the Board and Staff met in retreat to combine the above work, review the existing Mission, Vision, and Values, and draft this 2024-2027 Strategic Preservation and Development Plan.

2024 - 2027 Strategic Goals

In keeping with our value of neighborhood self-determination, the following strategic goals have been developed to reflect the [Community Priorities](#) expressed repeatedly by South Downtown Seattle community members engaging in a variety of outreach projects over the last 30 years.

1. *Mitigation of large-scale public projects.* HSD will provide capacity to help South Downtown neighborhoods of Pioneer Square and Chinatown International District thrive through major, disruptive events, projects and policy decisions. Current examples of this work include: the 2026 World Cup, Sound Transit light rail expansion, city/county Comprehensive Planning, and public infrastructure projects such as those contained in the Move Seattle Levy.
2. *Community livability.* HSD will identify opportunities to increase public health and safety efforts, building on existing community work in clean up, street outreach supporting unhoused residents, social services, harm reduction efforts, and coordination of services so that South Downtown is more safe and welcoming to all community members.

3. *Increase economic vitality* of the South Downtown neighborhoods. Promote the importance of small businesses to support a thriving local economy and strengthen ties to culture and history. Support the development of new housing in both neighborhoods, including promoting the conversion of unused and underutilized properties to fulfill existing community needs. Promote community ownership, anti-displacement efforts, and community-focused uses for open lands.
4. *Assist owners of URMs*. Unreinforced masonry buildings are a public health hazard during an earthquake and are the backbone of our historic districts. We will work with the city to ensure that new seismic retrofit ordinances achieve safety standards to prevent injury or loss of life, protect property investments, but also do not force economic hardship on owners or tenants.
5. *Build and sustain internal systems* to ensure proper use of public funds and other resources. Achieve sustainable funding for HSD operations and community investment. Track performance of strategic goals and report on progress annually to legislators and community.
6. *Emergency Operations*. In times of a State of Emergency as declared by a governmental jurisdiction, Historic South Downtown shall provide resources and funding consistent with our budget, revenue sources, and spending authority, in keeping with the mandates of RCW 43.167.

HISTORIC SOUTH DOWNTOWN THEORY OF CHANGE



=How We Do Our Work



=How We Are Accountable

Analysis & Need

The South Downtown Seattle neighborhoods of CID and PSQ bear disproportionate environmental, economic, and social burdens for large scale public projects and land use decisions.

Local government planning decisions continue a historic pattern of prioritizing economic gains for others without considering the impacts on residents, workers, and small businesses in these two beloved neighborhoods.

CID and PSQ residents and business owners have not been integrated meaningfully into decision-making processes for large scale public projects and land use decisions that directly affect their health, livelihoods, and cultural identity.



Long Term Impacts



Government decision-making processes proactively incorporate the needs of community. Public services are accessible for everyone who lives, plays, and works in South Downtown.



Community-led and government projects help preserve the cultural identity of the neighborhoods, increase safety, and promote economic vitality.



Housing and commercial properties are available at sustainable costs. Households of different sizes and economic capacity live in the neighborhoods. New and existing small businesses thrive. Building owners are able to maintain their buildings.



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