



Seattle

ROAD TO DOWNTOWN RECOVERY PLAN



2021



Building Back Better and More Equitable



The last 16 months has been the hardest in Seattle's history. But the Seattle we know is resilient, bold, and a city that has always invented the future. Seattle led the nation in our COVID-19 and vaccination response. The actions we took as a community – from health care and essential workers to businesses to the daily choices of every resident – saved thousands of lives. As the first city to fully vaccinate over 70% of our residents, Seattle is one of the safest cities in the country to live, work, or visit.

Every family, neighborhood, and business in Seattle has faced the impacts of COVID-19, and we have some tough months ahead as we build back a stronger, more just, and more equitable city. Seattle's long-term and equitable economic recovery relies on every neighborhood thriving, including our downtown. Downtown recovery is about supporting our favorite bookstores, shops at Pike Place, restaurants, breweries, museums, and theaters. Downtown recovery is about historic and diverse great residential neighborhoods like Belltown, Pioneer Square and the Chinatown-International district. Downtown recovery is

about returning sports, theatre, comedy, music, and art back to venues. Downtown recovery is about ensuring our young people have the opportunity for good paying jobs in our city.

The impacts of COVID-19 in downtown Seattle are stark: hundreds of storefronts were boarded up and businesses closed permanently, limited tourism and conferences let hotel rooms sit empty, and arts and cultural venues have been shuttered with tens of thousands losing their jobs and livelihoods. Hundreds of BIPOC small businesses that continue to call downtown home have struggled.

Getting our small businesses reopened and more jobs downtown is a key to a strong and sustained recovery. From July to October to boost economic activity downtown, we have put together an action plan funded with new federal funding to:

- Reopen and invest in our small businesses and cultural organizations
- Activate parks, venues, and streets with temporary street conversions, arts and cultural programming and performances, sporting events, outdoor dining and retail, promotions, and events
- Support a summer and fall return for workers who are currently remote by focusing on return to transit, addressing homelessness, and advancing public safety
- Increase graffiti and trash cleanup and beautification efforts with new art and murals

Some of the challenges of downtown and across the city – from public safety and gun violence to homelessness to child care to education opportunities – will require long term commitments to solve.

In the months to come, I want our West Seattle residents to take the Water Taxi to a vibrant Chinatown-International District, or to Pioneer Square for a Mariners game or Sounders match. We can come together to open the new Climate Pledge Arena and host outdoor concerts at Seattle Center and the beautiful waterfront, ensure our city employees and workers in the commercial district can enjoy downtown restaurants and bars, and have more tourists and conventions fill our hotels, stay downtown, and visit a bustling Pike and Pine corridor. Together, we can show our values at work throughout our city, but with our downtown core providing a stronger, more equitable and even more vibrant economic center than before the pandemic began.



Leading the Country in COVID-19 Response and Vaccinations



Lumen Field Event Center was the largest civilian led vaccination site in the country

On February 28, 2020, Public Health – Seattle & King County identified the first death of COVID-19.

This past year changed everything for all of us: Masks, testing, isolation. Losing loved ones. Small business owners struggling every day to survive. Workers facing lost wages and jobs, and unable to pay their rent. Parents grappling with childcare, kids at home, and online learning. And the pandemic disproportionately hit our Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities.

As difficult as this year has been for our region, our community took early action to save lives and lead the nation in our response to the pandemic.

Seattle continues to record the lowest cases of COVID-19 compared to the top 30 other major cities with currently available data. In addition, Seattle has some of the lowest hospitalizations and deaths throughout the entire crisis, despite being the earliest epicenter.

Looking back at the year, we took many bold steps early without any national playbook. We followed science and public health experts, acted with speed and urgency, and aligned at every level of government. As a community, we committed to taking care of one another by masking up, limiting our gatherings, staying home, and getting tested at our City's free sites.

One year into the crisis, Seattle reported the lowest cumulative cases of the top 30 major cities in the U.S. While we have faced three nationwide surges of the virus, Seattle and King County cases, hospitalizations, and deaths remained dramatically lower than every other American city.

And Seattle has led the way on vaccinations as well. As vaccinations became more available, the City undertook an unprecedented effort across government, health care, community-based organizations, and businesses to equitably and quickly vaccinate our communities.



The New York Times

Seattle's Virus Success shows What Could Have Been

The Seattle area once had more coronavirus deaths than anywhere else in the United States. A year later, the region's deaths per capita are lower than any other large metropolitan area.

By Mike Baker | Originally Published March 11, 2021



We didn't waste any time. On January 14, the Seattle Fire Department (SFD) became the first EMS agency in Washington state to administer vaccinations. During the Mayor's State of the City address in February, she set the ambitious goal of Seattle becoming the first major American city to fully vaccinate 70 percent of our eligible residents. **And on the first week of June, we reached that goal, and became the most vaccinated major city in the country.**

We reached this milestone through robust partnerships across health care providers. And we worked quickly as a government to launch five

fixed vaccination sites in neighborhoods across Seattle, as well as our Seattle Fire Department mobile teams which administered vaccine in some of the most impacted areas of our city, including affordable housing for seniors, middle and high schools, and adult family homes.

We also centered equity in every element of our vaccination efforts, which resulted in 48 percent of those vaccinated by the City of Seattle identifying as communities of color.

And when demand at fixed sites plummeted across the country, we launched innovative new strategies like in-stadium vaccination pop-ups, and partnerships with local small breweries and restaurants.

Our success in vaccinations is what will allow us the opportunity to reopen and recover, both in downtown and in neighborhoods across Seattle. We reached this milestone because of our commitment to community-wide health and safety, and we need to bring that same energy and belief to our downtown recovery efforts.

Downtown Seattle is our economic engine and our heartbeat, and it's up to all of us to support our workers, small businesses, and vulnerable communities downtown.



Seattle Fire Department administering 1,000th vaccine at a Mariners game

Events and Activation in Our Parks & Cultural Spaces

Downtown has always been a major epicenter for artists, musicians, museums, and sports. Seattle's ability to effectively recover citywide depends in large part on our ability to revitalize economic and cultural activity downtown.

As businesses and organizations can fully reopen on June 30, the City of Seattle and partners across downtown will be hosting dozens of events in downtown parks and public spaces. To support areas hardest hit by the pandemic, Seattle will invest \$1 million in business districts downtown to accelerate recovery and events while also creating a new grant program for artists and small businesses to offer incentives for customers and visitors.

Current spaces like Pike Place Market, Hing Hay Park, Westlake Park, and Seattle Center will be hosting events throughout the summer as new spaces opening during the pandemic like Pier 62 and Occidental Square Pavilion are awaiting new visitors.



Rain or shine, Pike Place Market is always a destination



Dancing 'Til Dusk event in Westlake Park in downtown

Key actions include:

- \$1 million of investments in business districts in the Chinatown-International District, Uptown, Belltown, and Pioneer Square (Summer 2021)
- Activating downtown parks, venues, streets with summer events, arts and cultural offerings, festivals, performances, and sporting events (Beginning July 2021)
- Incentives and grants for artists and small businesses for Welcome Back Weeks (Beginning July 2021)
- Reopening public spaces including City Hall, Seattle Central Library, and Seattle Center and challenging businesses to also reopen (Beginning July 2021)

Reopening Our Small Businesses and Arts Organizations



Expanding outdoor dining using parklets similar to the U-District Street Fair

Seattle's small businesses and arts organizations are part of the fabric of our city, playing a critical role in the health and diversity of our neighborhoods and economy.

For businesses reopening downtown, Seattle is expanding outdoor dining and retail opportunities, providing free transit for thousands of restaurant workers downtown, and supporting tens of millions of new funding available through Seattle and King County for stabilizing small businesses and arts organizations.

Hundreds of small businesses closed during the pandemic present new challenges to downtown. The City is creating a new fund to address empty storefronts with pop-ups and partnerships to ensure small businesses can hire staff.

Key actions include:

- Expanded outdoor dining and retail in downtown parks, sidewalks and streets (Summer 2021)
- Employers supporting small and independent retail cafes and restaurants with coffee and lunch gift cards for the re-opening period (Summer 2021)
- Addressing empty storefronts with temporary pop-ups and grants for businesses to re-open (Summer/Fall 2021)
- Investing in our creative sector economy and stabilizing arts nonprofits through the City of Seattle, King County, and federal funding (Summer/Fall 2021)
- Restaurant and hospitality worker training and hiring programs (Summer/Fall 2021)
- Small business stabilization funds and technical assistance (Ongoing into Winter 2021)

Seattle is expanding outdoor dining and retail opportunities

Helping Workers Safely Commute



Buses are out on a sunny morning on 3rd Ave

As businesses begin to reopen, downtown employers are creating return-to-office plans prioritizing worker safety and productivity.

From our buses to light rail, transit agencies implemented key COVID-19 safety measures during the pandemic to keep our residents safe. As Governor Inslee lifts restrictions, transit agencies will transition back to 100% capacity.

Key actions include:

- Resume full transit capacity at 100% (July 2021)
- Free ORCA Recovery Cards for CID and Pioneer Square restaurant and grocery workers (July 2021)
- Increased maintenance and staffing at key light rail stations and bus stops in downtown (Beginning July 2021)
- Additional Metro bus service and expansion of Light Rail service to Northgate (Fall 2021)



Transit partners keep Seattle commuting safely, even in snow

In addition to reopening and expanding transit, Seattle's downtown Center City Bike Network continues to grow and provide more connections to keep people moving.

Recent expansions toward our goal of a complete bike network which improves Seattle's health and quality of life for people of all ages and abilities includes include protected bike lanes on 4th Ave, Bell St, and 12th Ave.



Seattle's 2nd Ave protected bike lane keeps people moving downtown



Addressing Public Safety & Homelessness

COVID-19 magnified our homelessness crisis, especially in downtown Seattle. The City of Seattle and King County have committed new resources to addressing the homelessness crisis with a strong focus in downtown Seattle. Mayor Durkan believes we must address encampments in our parks, playfields, and downtown sidewalks with the hundreds of new tiny home villages, hotel based shelter, and 24/7 enhanced shelter opening in the Summer and Fall 2021.

In addition, new federal funding will help **1,250 individuals experiencing homelessness**. Seattle's Rescue Plan invests \$49 million in housing and homelessness, including a significant investment in downtown, which will help **750 individuals experiencing homelessness** including helping move 450 individuals into safer spaces and creating 300 new permanent homes. King County's new investments in homelessness will move an additional **500 individuals** downtown and unincorporated King County into safer spaces.



One of Seattle's tiny home villages housing residents in winter



Seattle's second Health One unit partners specially trained firefighters/ EMTs with social work case managers to respond to non-emergency 911 calls from people who may have substance abuse or mental health issues

Key actions include:

- As SPD staffing allows, increased visibility of uniformed officers and Community Service Officers leading up to and during events in key areas at peak times and areas where crime is prevalent (July 2021)
- Collaboration with community groups to develop tailored response plans for high impact behaviors and coordinated response with criminal justice partners to prioritize and identify solutions (Ongoing)
- Increased communications related to public safety actions and outcomes to residents, property owners, and workers (June 2021)
- A second Seattle Fire Department Health One unit is now operational to address low-acuity calls, with the third unit of Health One unit online and operational later this year (Fall 2021)



Community Cleanups & Beautification



Local artist Akira Ohiso puts the finishing touches on SLURP! mural in Chinatown International District to celebrate the immigrant journey

Community volunteer activities and collaborative beautification projects renew Seattle pride, build community and bring people back downtown. Last year, Mayor Durkan launched the Clean City program to add resources to more frequently clean our parks and address backlogs in maintenance.

The City will coordinate trash clean-up activities among downtown entities and City departments to improve downtown gateways and ensure that resources are deployed efficiently and areas with scheduled events are prioritized.

Key actions include:

- WSDOT to address all on/off ramp with trash mitigation and graffiti abatement (Beginning July 2021)
- New murals, temporary art, planters, and lighting (Summer 2021)
- Volunteer clean-up days in downtown neighborhoods (August 2021)
- Clean City Initiative and graffiti abatement (Summer and Fall 2021)

**CLEAN
CITY**
initiative
City of Seattle

Data cumulative January - May 2021



3,845,262
lbs of garbage collected



35
park
clean ups



448
sidewalk
blocks swept



332
graffiti
sites cleaned



Bright lights, big city – Seattle's downtown skyline and waterfront shine at night

Seattle Welcome Back Weeks

In partnership with Downtown Seattle Association, the City of Seattle will be hosting a series of events in Chinatown-International District, Pioneer Square and Westlake during the Welcome Back Weeks.

These events will be in partnership with small businesses, cultural organizations, artists, and community business districts to encourage workers and visitors to shop, stay, and come downtown. Welcome Back Weeks will include events that vary from large-scale concerts and retail promotions to different specials that encourage support for small downtown restaurants and bars.

- July 12 – July 25
- September 4 – September 19

Long Term Recovery Strategies

- Recruiting more diverse businesses to call downtown Seattle home
- Providing Seattle Promise and internship opportunities in downtown Seattle
- Establishing Regional collaboration to build pathways to quality jobs downtown
- Addressing empty retail, commercial and office space
- Transforming Seattle Center and Memorial Stadium
- Continue to address the challenges of homelessness and public safety



Downtown Revitalization Working Group

Name	Organization
Tiffany Washington, Executive Sponsor	Office of Mayor Durkan
Pamela Banks, co-chair	Seattle Office of Economic Development
Jon Scholes, co-chair	DSA
Robert Feldstein, facilitator	Cedar River Group
Adrienne Hixon	Nordstrom
Amada Cruz	SAM
Andrew Lewis	Seattle City Council
Anthony Auriemma	Starbucks
Ashton Allison	King County
Colleen Echohawk	Chief Seattle Club
Debora Juarez	Seattle City Council
Diane Carlson	King County Metro
Eric Pettigrew	Kraken
Gina Hall	Uplift Northwest
Jared Axelrod	Amazon
Joe Mizrahi	UFCW 21
Josh LaBell	Seattle Theatre Group
Kamala Saxton	Small Business Advisory Council/Marination
Kate Becker	King County Executive's Office
Kristen Sawin	Weyerhaeuser
Leslie Smith	Vulcan



Downtown Revitalization Working Group

Name	Organization
Lisa Howard	Alliance for Pioneer Square
Maiko Winkler-Chin	Chinatown/International District PDA
Marie Kurose	Workforce Development Council of Seattle/King County
Mark Rosen	Greater Seattle Business Assoc
Mary Bacarella	Pike Place Market PDA
Michael Greer	ArtsFund
Michelle Rusk	Downtown Residents Council
Monty Anderson	Seattle Building Trades
Nicole Grant	MLK Labor
Ollie Garrett	Tabor 100
Rachel Smith	Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce
Shannon Welles	Washington Nightlife & Music Association/Showbox
Shawn Jackson	Urban Renaissance Group
Stefan Moritz	UNITE HERE 8
Ted Sive	Watson Kennedy
Thatcher Bailey	Friends of the Waterfront
Tom Norwalk	Visit Seattle
Commissioner Bowman	Port of Seattle



Acknowledgments

The Road to Downtown Recovery Plan was made possible thanks to the contributions of countless neighborhood, business, and government partners. In addition to the community input of the Downtown Revitalization Working Group, special thanks to the many City of Seattle staff who put this report together.

Photographs: Tim Durkan (Seattle IT) front and back cover, others; Seattle Department of Transportation; Seattle Parks and Recreation

Additional Photographs Courtesy of: Seattle Seahawks (pg. 2); Seattle Mariners (pg.3) Sound Transit (pg. 6); Jason Huff (pg. 8)

