

Tacoma Theater District Placemaking Plan

Stakeholder Workshop #1

Summary 7/19/2017



Meeting Details

Stakeholder Workshop #1

Broadway Center for the Performing Arts, Studio 3

11:30 – 1:30 pm

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this stakeholder workshop—the first of three—was:

- To provide stakeholders an overview of the project area, approach, and process; and
- To solicit high-level input from community members about the Theater District’s greatest assets, challenges, and opportunities.

The stakeholder group is comprised of members of the public and representatives from neighborhood associations, community organizations, local businesses, and local business associations.

Attendees

Stakeholder Group (28)

Kim Bedier	Jennifer Hines	Scott Painter
Megan Berkinshaw	Lauren Hoogkamer	Dan Pike
Andy Beulow	Eric Huseby	David Schroedel
Sue Comis	Rebecca Japhet	Meredith Soniat
Katy Evans	Blaine Johnson	May Tuttle
Josh Deikmann	Heather Joy	Kristina Walker
Kara Dralle	Matthew Krough	Elly Walkowiak
Alexandra Fastle	Chris Larson	Adam Ydstie
Sarah Griffin	Tina Lee	
Max Henkle	Katie Lowery	

Project Partners

Pierce Transit: Janine Robinson, Jay Peterson

City of Tacoma: Amy McBride, Brian Boudet

Broadway Center for the Performing Arts: David Fischer, Leilani Balais

Citizen/Pierce Transit Transportation Advisory Group: Sandy Paul

Consultant Team

AHBL: Drew McEachern

Fehr & Peers: Aaron Gooze

ORA Architecture: Owen Richards

Sollod Studio: Ellen Sollod

Walker Macy: Calder Gillin, Mark Hinshaw, Saumya Kini, Lara Rose

3 Square Blocks: Marcia Wagoner, Rebecca Fornaby

Agenda

11:40 am	Welcome by <i>Janine Robinson – Pierce Transit</i>
11:45 am	Introductions & Presentation <i>Janine Robinson – Pierce Transit</i> <i>Amy McBride – City of Tacoma</i> <i>David Fischer – Broadway Center for the Performing Arts</i> <i>Mark Hinshaw – Walker Macy</i> <i>Calder Gillin – Walker Macy</i>
12:05 pm	Sticky Note Exercises
12:35 pm	Small Group Discussions
1:05 pm	Report-out
1:20 pm	Next Steps
1:30 pm	Adjourn



Participant Comments

Sticky Note Exercises

After the presentation, stakeholders circulated the room completing a series of exercises prompting them to respond to a total of six questions by writing their answer and a brief explanation on a sticky note and placing the note on the exercise board. There were two mapping exercises, two visioning exercises, and one prioritization exercise.

Mapping Exercise 1: Where are the best parts and your favorite places in the Theater District?

Stakeholders called out a wide range of locations in the District. The most common responses referenced the theaters in the District (Pantages, Grand, and Rialto), farmers markets, and Theater Square. Other assets identified included the District's historic buildings, density, walkability, and viewsheds.

Mapping Exercise 2: Where are the barriers or problems in the Theater District?

The most common responses included parking lots and garages, Commerce Street, and Theater Square. Several responses cited vacant storefronts and a lack of retail as problematic for the District. Safety was also identified as a barrier, with responses referencing dark streets and narrow

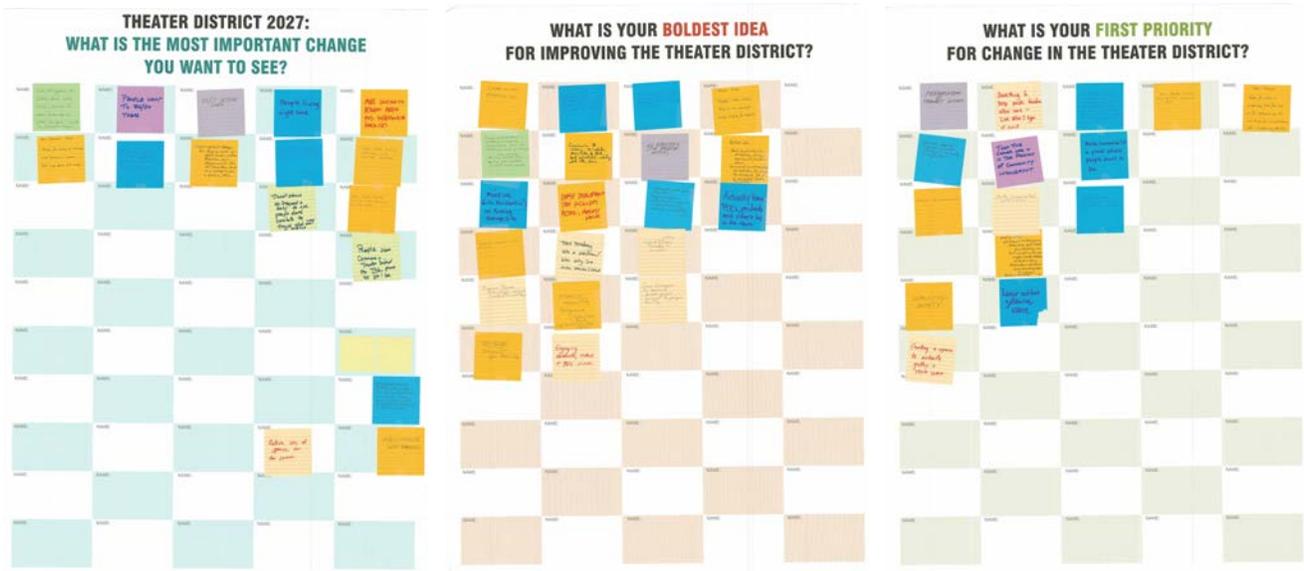
Another important change stakeholders identified was the transformation of the Theater District into a destination for the performing arts through the addition of more theaters—including a world-class performance venue—and more shows. One stakeholder suggested that neighborhood interest in this vision be leveraged through the Theater District Association. Additionally, responses reflected a strong desire for more public space, specifying that this space should be inviting, highly programmed, and active. Two responses suggested converting the Winthrop into a hotel. Finally, many stakeholders indicated that improved wayfinding to and within the District is a critical step toward any of these goals.

Visioning Exercise 2: What is your boldest idea for improving the Theater District?

Similar to the responses to the previous question, responses reflected a strong desire for dense, mixed-use development with housing above and retail at the ground level, particularly on Broadway and Commerce Street. Responses showed support for activating the district’s public spaces with street performances, concert series, and other programming. Other bold ideas included creating a car-free zone, removing parking entirely, and putting a “full lid” over Commerce Street to connect Park Plaza North to Theater Square and create more green space, while others suggested tearing out the fountain between Commerce Street and Theater Square and tearing out or retrofitting Park Plaza North. Several responses suggested creating a space for a year-round farmers market.

Prioritization Exercise: What is your first priority for change in the Theater District?

The most common priority was improving Commerce Street’s safety and cleanliness. Others were redesigning Theater Square to include an outdoor performance space, redesigning Park Plaza North, activating empty storefronts, and improving derelict buildings and infrastructure.





Discussion

After completing the sticky note activities, stakeholders broke out into facilitated groups to discuss a series of questions about the Theater District. At the end of the discussion, four groups of six to eight people identified the key points of their conversation, noted those points on the template provided, and presented those points to the larger group.

1. *What would make Theater Square a better public space for downtown Tacoma?*

- Improve the Square's public gathering function through additional programming
- Retain the large public area of the Square
- Increase connectivity, wayfinding, and access to and through the Square (with particular attention paid to the barrier created by the switchbacks connecting the Square to Commerce Street)
- Activate the Square with retail, adding food services to the south edge to activate and oversee the Square and encouraging more restaurants and cafes in buildings on the west side of Broadway
- Transfer management of the Square from Pierce Transit to the Broadway Center for the Performing Arts (or another non-profit with relevant expertise)
- Promote community ownership of the Square
- Redesign the Square by
 - Removing the raised planting areas containing shrubs

- Providing surfaces that are more usable for larger events
- Providing more lawn area for casual sitting
- Breaking down the physical barriers along the street side
- Considering a light, pavilion-like roof structure over some of the Square
- Designing for flexibility for a variety of uses, including a seating/stage configuration for outdoor performances
- Supporting proposed modifications to south side of Theater on the Square (public restrooms and sliding window wall)
- Redesign Broadway to be better integrated with the Square

2. *What would make Commerce Street a nicer place to be?*

- Increase safety (both perceived and real) through improved lighting and wider sidewalks
- Redesign the fountain facing Commerce Street (originally designed to mask the noise of buses, the running water also reduces visitors' awareness of their surroundings)
- Replace the fountain with a structure containing active uses on multiple levels
- Improve the character of the street between South 7th and 11th Street to match the "friendlier" character of more southern stretches Commerce Street
- Shift Commerce Street's image from its historic function as a purely utilitarian alley
- Beautify Commerce Street through the addition of greenery and art
- Close or repurpose the pedestrian tunnel through the parking garage
- Activate Commerce Street with the addition of retail, street performances, and unique attractions such as a slide connecting Broadway and Commerce Street

3. *What broader change would have the most positive impact? What would it take to bring that change about?*

- Indicate that the District is a "special place" and a destination through design and increased cultural activity
- Link destinations (both within the Theater District and to other parts of Downtown Tacoma) to make the District "explorable" to visitors
- Extend the character of Opera Alley into other areas around the district
- Create more green space throughout the Theater District
- Improve critical "bookend" venues, such as the Winthrop, Park Plaza North, and Woolworth building
- Redesign the 10th Street Hillclimb (and others)
- Increase usable gathering space in Theater Square
- Increase connectivity between Pacific Avenue, Commerce Street, and Broadway
- Increase the diversity of the stakeholder group to more fully represent the community that uses these spaces
- Extend hours of operation of local buses and streetcar to later in the evening on performance dates
- Encourage a significant increase in housing in the district, both new and retrofitted



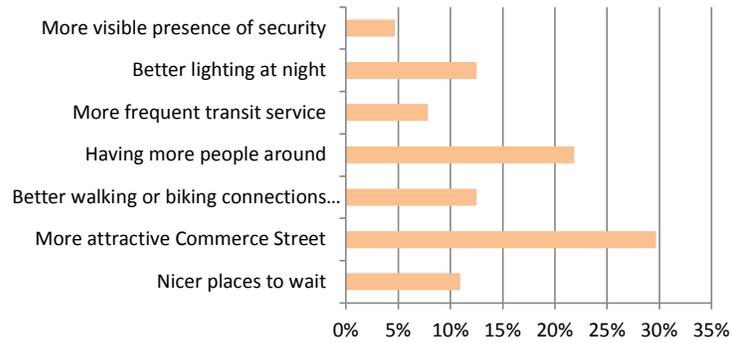
A Note on Public Process: Throughout these discussions, stakeholders expressed the need to accurately represent the Theater District community in the public process. Stakeholders suggest collaborating with residents, cultural groups, transit riders, and the School of the Arts, and making an effort to increase diversity within the stakeholder group itself.

GROUP DISCUSSION: KEY POINTS STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP #1	<i>Mark</i> GROUP DISCUSSION: KEY POINTS STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP #1	<i>Ellen</i> GROUP DISCUSSION: KEY POINTS STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP #1
THEATER SQUARE <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IMPROVE PUBLIC GATHERING 2. INCREASE ACCESS/CONNECTIVITY 3. CENTERPIECE OPEN SPACE OF DOWNTOWN 	THEATER SQUARE <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase flexibility of the space 2. Enhance accessibility & orientation 3. Activate all 4 sides 	THEATER SQUARE <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intentional BIZ + RESTAURANTS 2. INVITING GREEN SPACE 3. CONNECTIVITY
COMMERCE STREET <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MORE PED-FRIENDLY <i>lighting, green, air, water, shade, security</i> 2. ACTIVATE <i>fill in blanks/empty spaces?</i> 3. INCORPORATE HERITAGE 	COMMERCE STREET <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Entrance security/safety <i>(eg. lockers)</i> 2. Activation (not just transit) 3. Remove sense of an "alley" 	COMMERCE STREET <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ACTIVATION - <i>retail</i> 2. BEAUTIFICATION - <i>living wall green space</i> 3. CHUTES + LADDERS
BROADER CHANGE <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MORE MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT 2. INCREASE CULTURAL ACTIVITY <i>ACCESSIBLE REFERENTIAL</i> 3. LINK DESTINATIONS, "EXPLORABLE" 	BROADER CHANGE <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transfer management of space 2. More programming 3. Community needs to "own" it. 	BROADER CHANGE <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MORE DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS/DECISIONMAKERS 2. POSITIVE PARKING GARAGE TRANSFORMATION 3. INCREASE VEHICLE SPACE w/ PROJECTED GROWTH 4. IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY

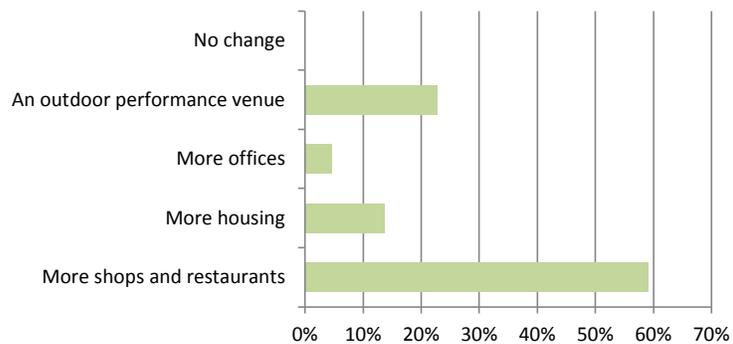
Survey

Stakeholders were asked to complete an anonymous three-question survey at the meeting.

1. *Over time, which kind of development would best support the vitality and character of the Theater District?*



2. *Which improvements would contribute most to a better transit experience in the District?*



3. *Which changes to Theater Square would best serve the neighborhood?*

