



Artist Space in Pioneer Square Meeting Summary Jan. 20, 2011

Attendees

Cathryn Vandenbrink, Artspace
Kevin Daniels, Nitze-Stagen
Sam Farrazaino, INscape
Heather Dwyer, 4Culture
Larry Ellington, Alaskan Way Viaduct Project
Randy Engstrom, Seattle Arts Commission
Councilmember Nick Licata, Seattle City Council
Frank Video, Seattle City Council

Michael Seiwerath, Capitol Hill Housing
Melissa Hines, Seattle Office of Arts & Cultural
Affairs
Kimberly Farley, Alaskan Way Viaduct Project
Roque Deherrera, City of Seattle
Jeremy Moller, JSH Properties
Andy Fife, Shunpike

Meeting Purpose

WSDOT and its partners recognize the importance of the artist community to the Pioneer Square Historic District and neighborhood. The goal of the meeting was to begin identifying spaces within Pioneer Square that would meet the needs of 619 Western tenants who will be displaced by construction to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct. The discussion was the first step toward developing an inventory of space in Pioneer Square that will be useful for tenants as they search for new space.

Summary Purpose

This document captures the main points discussed at the meeting; it is not intended to serve as meeting minutes. It includes comments made by individuals that don't necessarily reflect the opinions of everyone in the group. No formal decisions were made by the group beyond a general agreement to meet again in the near future.

Topics Covered

- *Availability of artist space in Pioneer Square*
 - A unique combination of factors, most notably affordability, is necessary to make a building a viable space for artists. Because of this, there is minimal artist space available in Pioneer Square.
 - Some buildings in the neighborhood have space, but it's not suitable for artists.
 - Affordable rental space for artists generally costs between \$1.00 per square foot/month and \$1.80 per square foot/month, depending on size and use.
 - Unlike a year or two ago, there is very little vacancy on upper floors of buildings in Pioneer Square.

- Most of the vacancies in the neighborhood are in buildings that owners can't afford to upgrade.
- Even if there is a way to successfully relocate a large number of 619 Western tenants to existing and/or proposed artist spaces in the neighborhood, the loss of 619 Western would still result in a net loss of artist space.
- *Challenges*
 - 619 Western provides a unique situation for artists that will be difficult to replicate.
 - Building codes and regulations limit opportunities to develop new, low-cost spaces within existing buildings.
 - There are opportunities for temporary spaces, as evidenced by the Storefronts program, but permanent space is much more difficult to find or create.
 - Relocating 100 artists will create an even greater premium for artist space than currently exists.
 - Because artist space is limited, some tenants may choose or need to leave 619 Western early to secure a new space. Those who do could become ineligible for relocation benefits.
 - Many in Pioneer Square have emphasized the value of the artist community to the neighborhood. Likewise, several artists have expressed an interest in remaining in Pioneer Square. However, some artists may be open to relocating elsewhere, particularly if other areas have more affordable spaces than Pioneer Square.
- *Properties discussed*
 - 619 Western
 - Located at 619 Western Avenue.
 - 56,000 square feet of artist space, not including common areas and retail (68,000 square feet total)
 - Six floors
 - Spaces range in size from 200 to 2,000 square feet.
 - Rental prices range from \$1.00 to \$1.60 per square foot/month.
 - INS Building
 - Located at 815 Airport Way S.
 - 77,000 square feet.
 - Five floors
 - Rental prices range from \$1.00 to \$1.80 per square foot/month.
 - Co-owned by Sam Farrazaino.
 - Expected to be virtually leased up by the time tenants can officially qualify for benefits with which to relocate.
 - Artspace: Tashiro Kaplan Building
 - Located at 115 Prefontaine Place S.
 - 40,000 square feet.
 - Opened in June 2004 to provide 50 units of affordable housing and creative space to artists and their families.
 - Also houses 27 commercial arts related entities, including the non-profit agency 4Culture, individual artist work-only studios, artist exhibit co-ops and commercial galleries.
 - Artists may wait up to four years for a space.

- Artspace: Mt. Baker Station Lofts
 - Site location is next to Mt. Baker Light Rail Station on Rainier Avenue S. and Martin Luther King Jr. Way S.
 - Artspace hopes to begin construction in 2012 on additional space in the building that would accommodate up to 20 artists. The new spaces could open no earlier than spring 2013.
- Seattle Plumbing
 - Located at Railroad Way S. and Occidental Avenue S., to the west of Qwest Field.
 - Plans for residential development at the building, including an addition to the upper floors, are stalled.
 - The building is permitted, but would be very expensive to buy as is because the current owner has invested a great deal of money in it.
- Metropole Building
 - Located at the corner of Second Avenue and Yesler Way.
 - Three stories.
 - Damaged by fire in 2007 and now vacant.
- *Tenant relocation*
 - Relocation assistance won't be available until after WSDOT makes an offer on the building and/or property.
 - Offers will be made after the Record of Decision is issued in August.
 - To qualify for assistance, tenants would need to stay in the building and continue to pay rent until WSDOT owns the building.
 - Tenants who move into the building now would possibly qualify for assistance if they are still occupying the building when an offer is made and meet other criteria.
 - The tenants will need to be relocated by March 30, 2012.
- *Questions and/or suggestions for further exploration*
 - In terms of preserving the artist community in Pioneer Square, it is important to assist 619 Western tenants who want to move together.
 - Finding a way to connect the International District and Pioneer Square artist communities is important to the success of this effort.
 - The affordable housing requirement at the new North Lot development could potentially be used by artists.
 - WSDOT mitigation funding could contribute to solving the shortage of artist space. The amount and allocation of funding have not yet been determined.
 - We should explore ways to create incentives for landowners to convert or develop more artist space.
 - If all or most Western Building tenants can't be relocated to a single building, efforts should be made to relocate them in clusters to other locations in the neighborhood.
 - Discussion has suggested three areas for focus: 1) Technical assistance to help artists understand and prepare for the situation. 2) Finding a building or clusters of spaces in Pioneer Square, as well exploring potential changes to building codes and opportunities to work with the Department of Planning and Development to expedite the creation of new spaces. 3) Determining the level of available funding, both from the State and other

sources. Creating task forces to focus on the different areas might be a good way to tackle the issue.