

BIG MOVES

for a Bold Future

10-Year Vision and Strategic Plan



Downtown
Seattle
Association

A Message from DSA Leadership



Jon Scholes
President & CEO

Downtown Seattle stands at a critical inflection point. More people are living Downtown than ever before, visitor activity has rebounded strongly, and transformational investments continue to reshape the city center. At the same time, significant challenges remain, including public safety concerns, behavioral health issues and a rapidly shifting Downtown economy. Downtown's future success will depend on our ability to meet those challenges with urgency, partnership and bold action.

Big Moves for a Bold Future is a vision for the next decade of Downtown Seattle, laying out the roadmap for the next three years of organization action. Developed through extensive engagement with business leaders, residents, public agencies, nonprofit organizations and community partners, the plan identifies a focused set of priorities where greater investment and collaboration can accelerate long-term transformation and strengthen Downtown's role as the economic and cultural heart of Seattle and the region.



Mari Horita
DSA Board of Directors Chair

While DSA remains deeply committed to the essential services and daily work that help keep Downtown healthy and welcoming, this plan focuses on several "big moves" that can create lasting impact across the center city. From advancing solutions to behavioral health and public safety challenges to reimagining Downtown's economy, strengthening the Pike and Pine corridor, and elevating arts, culture, sports and entertainment, these priorities are intended to focus, complement and expand the work already underway across these areas.

Seattle has always been a city defined by resilience, initiative and ambition. We are grateful to the many partners, stakeholders and community members who helped shape this plan and who continue to invest in Downtown's future. Together, we have an extraordinary opportunity to further shape a Downtown Seattle that is vibrant, connected and welcoming for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jon Scholes".

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mari Horita".

Strategic Framework

The following Strategic Framework is an illustrative **one-page overview** of the Big Moves Plan.

From the Downtown Vision, DSA's Mission, and the organization's critical roles to the importance of a compelling brand for Downtown and essential Big Moves, the Strategic Framework provides **a clear roadmap to translate vision into action** over the next 10 years. The remainder of this document outlines each of these components in detail.

VISION

Downtown Seattle is...

**A SAFE, CLEAN, AND
WELCOMING PLACE**

**A WALKABLE AND
INTER-CONNECTED
DISTRICT**

**A DIVERSE, COHESIVE
COMMUNITY ROOTED
IN RICH HISTORY**

**THE ECONOMIC AND
CULTURAL HEART OF
THE CITY AND REGION**

MISSION

DSA's Mission is to **CREATE A HEALTHY, VIBRANT DOWNTOWN FOR ALL.**

With the support of diverse private, public, non-profit and resident partners, we are leading Downtown's evolution and providing vision and leadership on the critical issues and opportunities facing Seattle's urban core.

ROLES

We are... **CONVENORS | CATALYSTS | IMPLEMENTERS | ADVOCATES | STORYTELLERS**

BRAND

WE OWN AND TELL DOWNTOWN'S UNIQUELY SEATTLE STORY: A bold, exciting brand is grounded in our authentic identity, gritty resilience, and deep legacy found within a mosaic of distinct urban districts in an unparalleled natural setting – providing a new and influential narrative for what Downtown is and what it means to the city, region, and world.

BIG MOVES

Focused, sustained, and data-driven action on four Big Moves will advance the Vision, Mission, and Brand and drive tangible transformation in Downtown.

1

**ADVANCE
SOLUTIONS FOR
DOWNTOWN'S
BEHAVIORAL
HEALTH, UNHOUSED,
AND DRUG CRISES**

2

**BUILD THE NEW
DOWNTOWN
ECONOMY**

3

**CATALYZE PIKE
+ PINE AS THE
THRIVING AND
CONNECTED
CENTER OF
DOWNTOWN**

4

**ELEVATE ARTS,
CULTURE,
SPORTS, AND
ENTERTAINMENT
AS THE SOUL OF
DOWNTOWN**

Big Moves

While DSA remains deeply committed to the essential services and programs that support our daily work across Downtown and the Metropolitan Improvement District (MID), this plan identifies a set of **Big Moves** in which greater focus and investment can accelerate long-term success. Focused and data-driven, these priorities are intended to complement—not replace—our ongoing efforts and together will advance DSA’s Vision, Mission, Roles and Brand.

These ambitious, structural shifts will ultimately reposition Downtown Seattle as a model for urban recovery, economic innovation, and human-centered city-building in the 21st century.

1



**Advance Solutions
for Downtown’s
Behavioral Health,
Unhoused, and Drug
Crises**

2



**Build the New
Downtown Economy**

3



**Catalyze Pike + Pine
as the Thriving and
Connected Center of
Downtown**

4



**Elevate Arts,
Culture, Sports, and
Entertainment as the
Soul of Downtown**

Advance Solutions for Downtown's Behavioral Health, Unhoused, and Drug Crises

Collaborating with a range of public, private, and non-profit partners, DSA—including the MID/Ambassadors team—is the convenor and driving force of a coordinated response to innovate on and disrupt cycles of **homelessness, behavioral and mental health challenges, and substance abuse disorders.**

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

This is one of the defining challenges of our generation in cities across America, and Downtown Seattle cannot afford to wait for someone else to solve it. DSA's approach is neither punitive nor passive: it is data-informed, human-centered, and pragmatic, rooted in the belief that lasting change requires coordinated systems, not isolated interventions.

Although there has been measurable improvement in public safety trends in the Downtown Core, immense work still needs to be done.

- » While declining, violent crime remains **18%** above 2015-2019 average
- » **20%** of all 2025 overdose deaths in Seattle occurred in Downtown
- » Total number of people unsheltered in King County increased more than **20%** between 2024 and 2026



Build the New Downtown Economy

Attractive on the national and global scales, Downtown is an **innovative blend of businesses, talent, creativity, and entrepreneurship**. It is a robust, complete neighborhood with a mix of office, civic, retail, residential, hospitality, education, and entertainment, with basic and functional amenities and services that support a wide range of investment, growth, workforce development, and livability.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The economy of Downtown Seattle is being reimagined for what it must become. With office vacancy at historic levels and worker foot traffic well below pre-pandemic levels, the path forward is not through waiting for previous patterns of commerce to return; it is through reinventing Downtown's economy entirely.

- » Downtown lost an estimated **13,000** jobs in 2025 and **30,000** over the last four years
- » Office vacancy is more than **30%**
- » The 10 highest-value Downtown office properties have seen assessed values decline by more than **50%** since 2021
- » Downtown worker foot traffic in 2025 represents **64%** of 2019 levels
- » Ground floor vacancy persists in many critical corridors

BIG MOVE

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Catalyze Pike + Pine as the Thriving and Connected Center of Downtown

From the Waterfront and Pike Place Market to the Convention Center and Capitol Hill, Pike + Pine is the bustling epicenter of Downtown. This experiential destination is **one of the best pedestrian districts in the country**: alive with a mix of uses, vibrant retail, active streets, and dynamic programming day and night.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Pike + Pine is our “50-yard line”, both the physical center of Downtown Seattle and a recognizable corridor connecting to adjacent neighborhoods and assets. It carries the city center’s highest concentration of foot traffic and holds its greatest unrealized potential. By connecting the newly reimagined Seattle Waterfront through the Westlake Center hub to the Convention Center expansion, and beyond to unique adjacent neighborhoods, the key ingredients of a world-class pedestrian corridor are already in place. What is needed now is activation of both the public and private realms.

- » Local (residents within ten miles of Downtown) Pike + Pine foot traffic remains just **~75%** of 2019 levels
- » Ground-floor vacancy along the corridor is **~32%**
- » Drug use and trade, street homelessness, and social behavioral issues persist



Elevate Arts, Culture, Sports, and Entertainment as the Soul of Downtown

Downtown is a premier global destination for authentic and exciting arts, culture, sports, and entertainment experiences. From world-class stadiums and intimate venues to temporal exhibits and events, Downtown supports a full urban lifestyle experience anchored in an **unmatched place of cultural vibrancy, creativity, surprise, and human connection.**

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Seattle is one of the great sports and arts cities in the world. It is a city of artists, makers, musicians, and storytellers. It is also a city where Indigenous heritage and immigrant culture intersect on the same block, in the same gallery, or at the same festival. This Big Move is about amplifying what is already true: creating full-spectrum experiences that bring people Downtown for a unique Downtown Seattle experience that turns into a lifelong memory and repeat visits.

- » Downtown is home to **66%** of Seattle's art sector jobs and **20%** of the region's overall arts employment base
- » Attendance at many Downtown arts and cultural venues remains **40%** lower than 2019 levels
- » Recent major events (Super Bowl Parade, World Cup) demonstrate Seattle's unique and unmatched mix of proximity, walkability, culture, and urban experience

BIG MOVE

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Implementation:

Putting Vision and Strategy into Action

Downtown Seattle is the region's economic engine and its most visible measure of civic health. DSA has been its leading advocate for nearly seven decades, and the Big Moves Plan sharpens that commitment into strategic actions with owners, timelines, and measures attached.

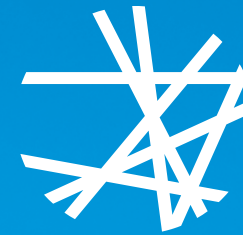
DSA will lead the implementation of the Big Moves Plan in partnership with many organizations that will contribute to its success. Private employers, public agencies, nonprofits, and major institutions shaped both the plan and its implementation framework. Those partners identified where their own priorities already align with the Big Moves, where they expect roadblocks, and which actions need concentrated and collaborative energy to move forward.

The work continues through those same partners. DSA's board and executive team own this plan. Each Big Move has a named lead who reports progress to the board;

standing committees will carry the continuing work; and DSA will convene time-limited task forces when an action needs a decision that sits outside the organization. Every one of those decisions will be guided by the vision set in this plan. DSA will track progress on a public dashboard, measuring both the specific actions underway and the overall health of Downtown. The organization will report what the numbers show and with full transparency, even when the results fall short of what DSA hoped for.

No single organization can deliver a decade of change in a place this complex. **DSA will convene the partners, advocate for the policy and funding these actions require, implement the work that belongs to us, and tell the story** of what Downtown is becoming. The Downtown described in this plan is within reach, and the people who will build it are poised to achieve a bold future.





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