



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Pierce Transit
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PRESENTER: Janine Robinson, Planning, Pierce Transit
SUBJECT: Theater Square Planning Update
DATE: April 23, 2019

PRESENTATION TYPE:
Informational Briefing

SUMMARY:

At the heart of Tacoma's downtown between 9th and 11th is Theater Square, home to Pierce Transit largest bus turnaround facility, the City's North Park Plaza parking garage, Pantages Theater, and Broadway and Commerce Streets. The Tacoma Theater District Placemaking Plan identified a Public Space Framework and two design concepts for Theater Square and Commerce Street.

BACKGROUND:

The Tacoma Theater District Placemaking Plan came out of a partnership between Pierce Transit, the City of Tacoma, and Tacoma Arts Live. The partners shared a vision for a more welcoming and active downtown – a place where arts, culture and civic events are available to residents, workers, and visitors with robust access to transit. The plan builds on the district's existing assets and identifies new opportunities to create a stronger sense of place.

The concepts and recommendations in the plan can positively impact economic development in downtown Tacoma by bringing people and activity to the Theater District. The plan recognizes the importance of redevelopment of Park Plaza North, ground floor retrofits to create storefronts, treatments on blank walls to bring people and energy to Commerce St and support transit riders, theatergoers, and the neighborhood in general.

Through robust partnership and collaboration, there is opportunity to bring economic and community development elements, including but not limited to housing, retail, services, events, and regular programming of arts, culture and recreation activities to this unprogrammed community asset.

To this end, Pierce Transit has been strategizing with Metro Parks Tacoma, City of Tacoma, Tacoma Arts Live and the BIA regarding how to better manage and program this public space.

ISSUE:

Historically, the Theater District has lacked a sense of strong ownership. Responsibility for maintenance and programs has been blurred, leading the area out of a state of good repair. As Downtown Tacoma continues to attract new businesses, the time is now to bring together the right stakeholders to ignite this space, making it a destination people look forward to visiting, while livening up the downtown core.



ALTERNATIVES:

This is an information briefing only. There are no alternatives presented.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This is an information briefing only. There is no fiscal impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

“This is an information briefing only. There is no recommendation.”

However, next steps that build on the momentum of the Theater District Placemaking Plan include:

Programming and Management Partnerships. Activating the plaza with events and activities will encourage visitors and engage the community. Pierce Transit is working on grant applications to assist with creating usable space and amenities on the plaza that are outside of typical transit agency business. We welcome any and all partnership opportunities that will help implement the vision.

Commerce Street Waterwall Repurposing. The complex water feature that has flowed during summers is in need of major repairs and ongoing maintenance. Due to the high costs and maintenance burden of this feature, Pierce Transit is repurposing the waterwall so it will function differently from how it has in the past, and will also contribute to creating a sense of place.

Development Partnerships and Opportunities. Both concepts for redesign of Theater Square include some redevelopment opportunities – retail along Commerce Street and a potential mixed-use building on Theater Square, as well as covered stage and retail kiosk space for events and vendors. Pierce Transit invites any and all partners to come together with proposals that will help implement the vision.