

The background image shows the Space Needle on the left, with water spraying from its top. In the foreground, a fountain with a large, textured rock in the center is active, with multiple jets of water spraying upwards. A large, semi-transparent green circular graphic with concentric circles is overlaid on the fountain area. The sky is clear blue, and there are green trees in the background.

# SEATTLE CENTER STRATEGIC VISION AND 10-YEAR ACTION PLAN

**JUNE 30, 2025**



## About Seattle Center

Seattle Center is a 74-acre civic, arts, and cultural gathering place in the heart of Seattle. It is home to more than 30 partner organizations—including Climate Pledge Arena, MOPOP, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Seattle Opera, KEXP, SIFF, and others—alongside world-class attractions, historic venues, public art, and an active calendar of free and affordable events.

As a City of Seattle department and anchor of the Uptown Arts & Cultural District, Seattle Center serves as a hub for creative expression, cultural diversity, and civic life.

Seattle Center also manages the City's new Waterfront Park in partnership with Friends of Waterfront Seattle, delivering cultural programming, operations, and civic care on Seattle's revitalized downtown waterfront.

In 2025, Seattle Center is projected to generate over \$900 million in visitor spending, \$2 billion in total regional economic impact, and support more than 18,600 jobs. With the support of our Official Partners—Alaska Airlines, The Climate Pledge, Coors Light, Pepsi, Premera Blue Cross, Symetra, T-Mobile, and WaFd Bank—Seattle Center is the #1 most-visited arts and cultural destination in the Pacific Northwest.

[www.seattlecenter.com](http://www.seattlecenter.com)



## About Seattle Center Foundation

Seattle Center Foundation is the nonprofit partner to Seattle Center, working to inspire public and private investment in the future of this extraordinary civic space.

Founded in 1977 by civic leaders who believed in the enduring value of the 1962 World's Fair legacy, the Foundation has helped fund major capital projects (like McCaw Hall and Fisher Pavilion), expanded public programming, and supported strategic planning—including the Strategic Vision and 10-Year Action Plan.

The Foundation leads fundraising efforts that make Seattle Center's mission possible—ensuring it remains welcoming, inclusive, and alive with opportunity for all.

Seattle Center is not just a place—it's a promise. A shared vision of what a city can become when it comes together.

As Seattle Center prepares for one of the most dynamic decades in its history—from the Memorial Stadium redevelopment to World Cup 2026—Seattle Center Foundation is proud to lead the call for public and philanthropic investment.

[www.seattlecenterfoundation.org](http://www.seattlecenterfoundation.org)

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Letter from **Marshall Foster**, Director, Seattle Center, and **Jane Zalutsky**, Executive Director, Seattle Center Foundation

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## A LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

Dear Friends and Partners of Seattle Center,

As one of our City's most iconic civic spaces, Seattle Center is far more than a destination—it's a **dynamic hub of culture, innovation, and community that reflects the very spirit of Seattle.**

For decades, Seattle Center has been an epicenter of gathering. A place where Seattle comes together to celebrate our rich diversity, our creative energy, and our shared aspirations. From the historic legacy of the 1962 World's Fair to the everyday moments that continue to shape lives here, the Center remains a place where ideas take flight, memories are made, and community comes together.

This new vision is guided by what I call Space Needle thinking: the innovative mindset that has fueled **Seattle's spirit of being daring, imaginative and forward-thinking.** This kind of thinking built the campus that has inspired the world and harnesses the same spirit that will carry Seattle Center—and our entire city—into a successful, vibrant future.

As mayor, I believe in and fully support the leaders and minds that will move this strategic plan and bold vision forward. Together, we will ensure that Seattle Center continues to serve not only as a cultural and civic anchor for our residents but as a regional beacon of civic pride, possibility, and progress.

Sincerely,

**Bruce Harrell**  
Mayor of Seattle





## A LETTER FROM **MARSHALL FOSTER** AND **JANE ZALUTSKY**

**Seattle Center is on the move.** Since the pandemic, cultural events have returned, and new audiences are discovering all that our campus offers. We've expanded our role to manage the new Waterfront Park, bringing our expertise to this dynamic space. This summer, we break ground on a new Memorial Stadium, setting the stage for a new era of sporting and cultural events under the Space Needle. In 2026, we'll host over 500,000 people for Seattle's Fan Celebration during the World Cup—the largest event since the 1962 World's Fair.

But with growth comes challenge. Our beloved campus is showing its age, and both our partner organizations and Seattle Center itself face growing financial pressures that threaten our future.

That's why the Seattle Center and Seattle Center Foundation have joined forces to create this **Strategic Vision and 10-Year Action Plan**. Crafted over nine months with input from community leaders, experts, and stakeholders, this plan lays the groundwork for a historic reinvestment of both public and private support for Seattle Center. This vision will strengthen our ability to support campus partners, enhance public spaces, and deepen community connections—all while ensuring Seattle Center's financial stability. If we act on this plan, it will be the most significant investment in Seattle Center since the 1962 World's Fair.

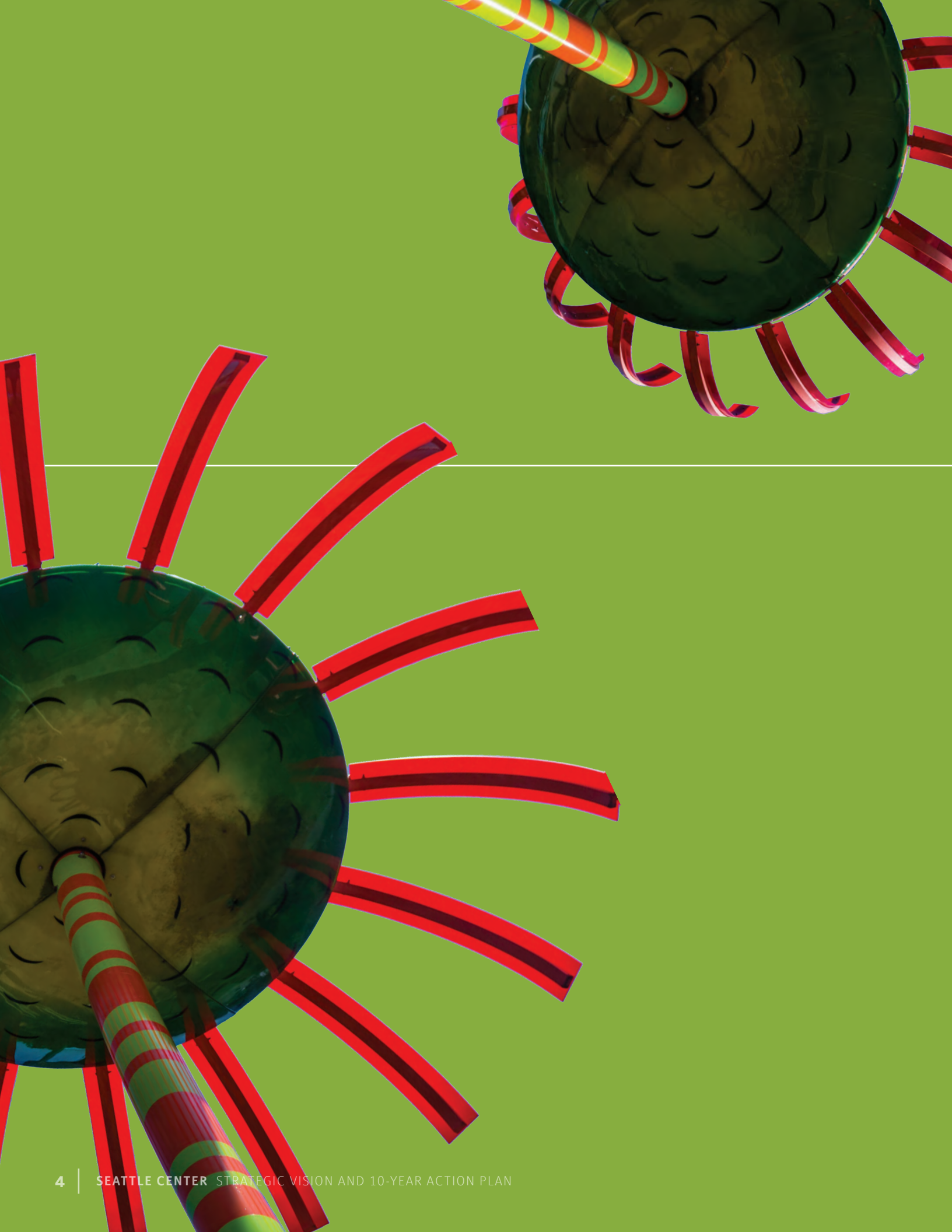
Seattle Center serves our community every day: hosting free events, performances, and offering public spaces where memories are made. Whether it's a festival, a protest or a quiet moment at the International Fountain, people love to share their Seattle Center stories. We are excited to share this vision with you and hope you will join us in securing **a sustainable, vibrant future for Seattle Center—for generations to come.**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marshall C. Foster".

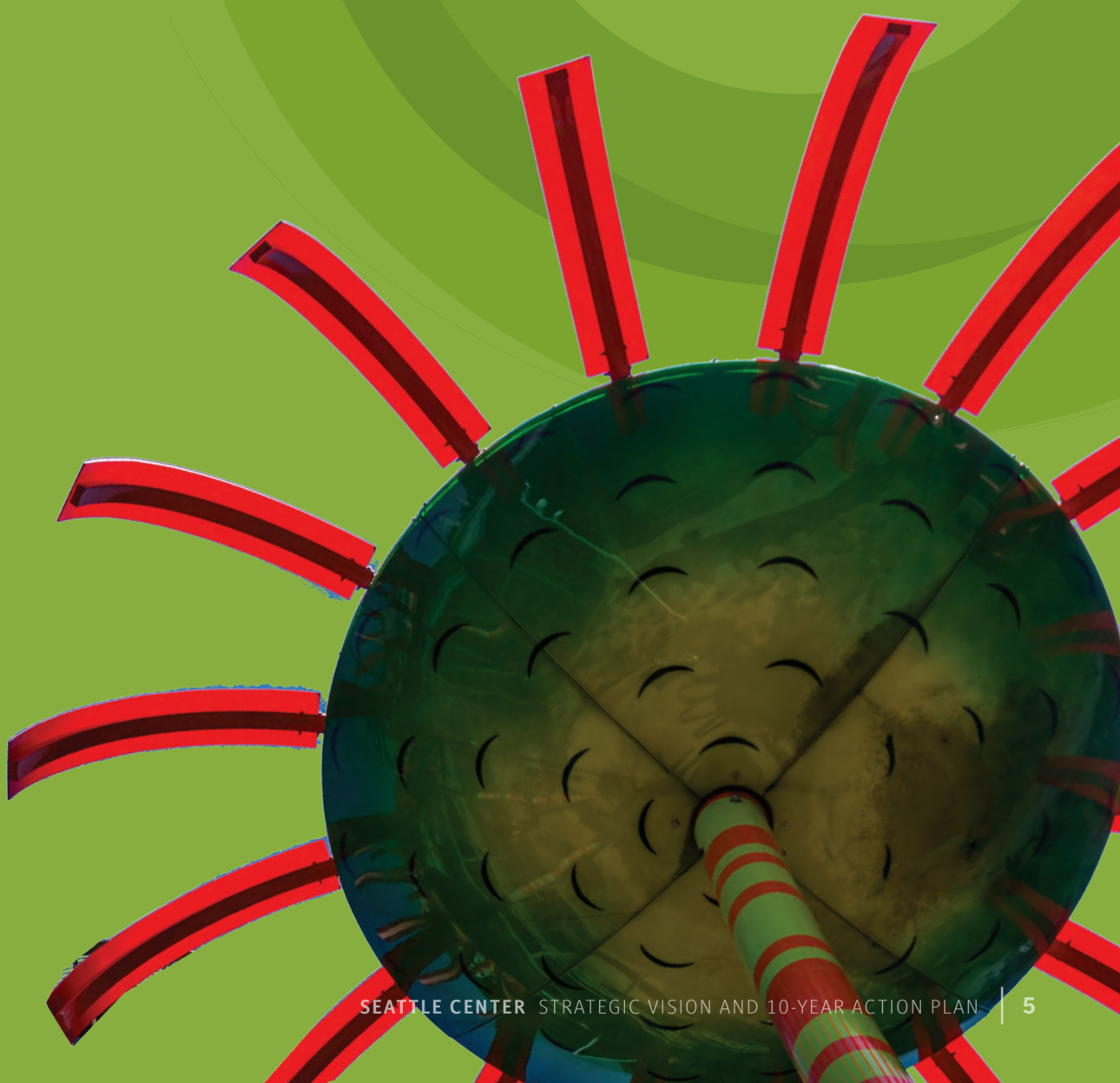
**Marshall Foster**  
Director, Seattle Center

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Zalutsky".

**Jane Zalutsky**  
Executive Director, Seattle Center Foundation



# INTRODUCTION





# CONTRIBUTORS

The Strategic Vision and 10-Year Action Plan (“Strategic Vision and Action Plan”) was led by a partnership between Seattle Center and the Seattle Center Foundation, and informed by Seattle Center staff, the Foundation Board, the Seattle Center Advisory Commission, Mayor Bruce Harrell, the Mayor’s Office team, and a broad range of community and Seattle Center stakeholders. We especially thank the members of the Kitchen Cabinet, volunteers who lent their significant community connections, experience, and wisdom to shaping the Strategic Vision and Action Plan in a series of workshops over the past year.

## Seattle Center Strategic Vision and Action Plan Project Team

**Jane Zalutsky**, *Executive Director, Seattle Center Foundation*  
**Marshall Foster**, *Director, Seattle Center*  
**Diamatris Winston**, *Deputy Director, Seattle Center*  
**Karin Butler**, *Strategic Advisor, Organizational Development, Seattle Center*  
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**Kate Joncas**, *Director of Urban Strategy and Development, MIG*

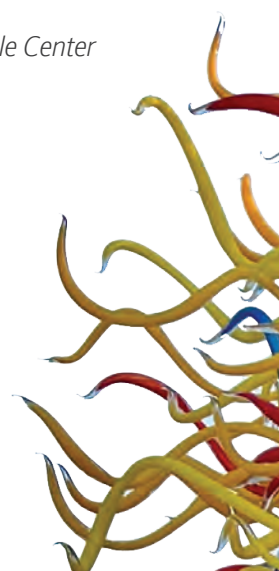
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## Seattle Center Strategic Vision and Action Plan Kitchen Cabinet Members

**Maria Barrientos**, *Barrientos RYAN / Seattle Center Foundation*  
**Manny Cawaling**, *Inspire Washington*  
**Gloria Alvarez Connors**, *Connors & Company / SCAC*  
**Matt Griffin**, *Real Estate Developer*  
**Gerry Johnson**, *Pacifica Law Group / Central Waterfront Oversight Committee*  
**Rob Johnson**, *Seattle Kraken and Climate Pledge Arena / Seattle Center Foundation*  
**Matt Hanna**, *Cairncross & Hempelmann / Seattle Center Foundation*  
**Joanne Harrell**, *First Lady, City of Seattle*  
**Will Ludlum**, *First Person PR / SCAC*  
**Kyle Rolfe**, *Wright Hotels, Inc / Seattle Center Foundation*  
**Michele Smith**, *Museum of Pop Culture (MOPOP)*  
**Reese Tanimura**, *Northwest Folklife*  
**Ellen Walker**, *Pacific Northwest Ballet*

## Seattle Center Foundation Board of Directors

**Matt Hanna**, *President, Managing Partner, Cairncross & Hempelmann*  
**Maria Barrientos**, *Vice President, Barrientos RYAN*  
**Katherine Cheng**, *Secretary, Vice President of Culture & DEI, Seattle Mariners*  
**Kate Becker**, *Creative Economy & Recovery Director, King County*  
**Jeremiah Captain**, *Vice President, X-Factor Capital*  
**Erin Hobson**, *Executive Vice President, Sellen Construction*  
**Lynn Hubbard**, *Community Advocate*  
**Rob Johnson**, *Senior Vice President, Sustainability and Transportation, Seattle Kraken, and Climate Pledge Arena*  
**Tom Mara**, *Executive Director, Seattle International Film Festival*  
**Michelle Merriweather**, *President & CEO, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle*  
**Ty Rogers**, *Vice President, Global Corporate Communications, Amazon*  
**Kyle Rolfe**, *Vice President, Wright Hotels, Inc.*  
**Brian Surratt**, *President & CEO, Greater Seattle Partners*  
**Sung Yang**, *Principal, Pacific Public Affairs*  
**Marshall Foster**, *Ex-Officio–Director, Seattle Center*  
**Jane Zalutsky**, *Executive Director*



## Seattle Center Advisory Commission

**Sally Bagshaw**, *Former Seattle City Councilmember*

**Eric Berlinberg**, *Head of Program Management, Torc Robotics*

**Lara Mae D. Chollette**, *Head of People Operations, Atomo Coffee*

**Gloria Alvarez Connors**, *Owner, Connors & Company*

**Mark Dederer**, *Director, Philanthropic Services, Hohimer Wealth Management*

**Michael George**, *Senior Consultant, Kidder Mathews*

**Holly D. Golden**, *Attorney, Hills Clark Martin & Peterson*

**Stacey E. Hutchison**, *Director of Content Policy, Audible Inc.*

**Meral Kandymova**, *Get Engaged Member*

**Koichi Kobayashi**, *Principal, Kobayashi Global*

**Will Ludlam**, *Principal, First Person Public Relations*

**Matthew Mead**, *Director, Social Media Strategy, Known*

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**Sarah Rich**, *Marketing Consultant, Self Employed*

**Joy R. Shigaki**, *President & CEO, Friends of Waterfront Seattle*

## Seattle Center Teams

**Executive Team**

**Leadership Team**

**Division Leaders and Staff**

**Race and Social Justice Change Team**

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## Consulting Team

**MIG, Inc.**

**Kate Joncas**, *Director and Project Manager*

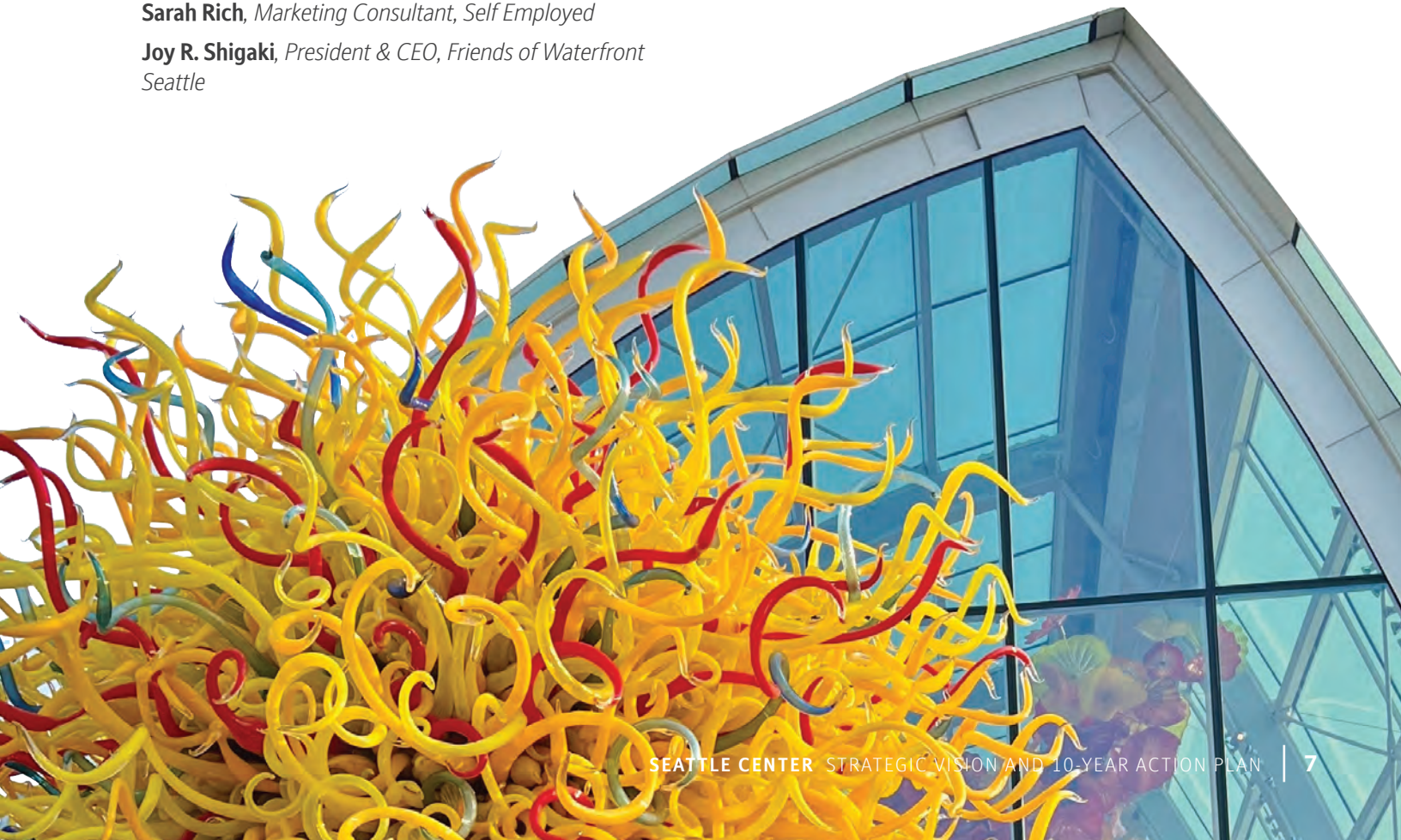
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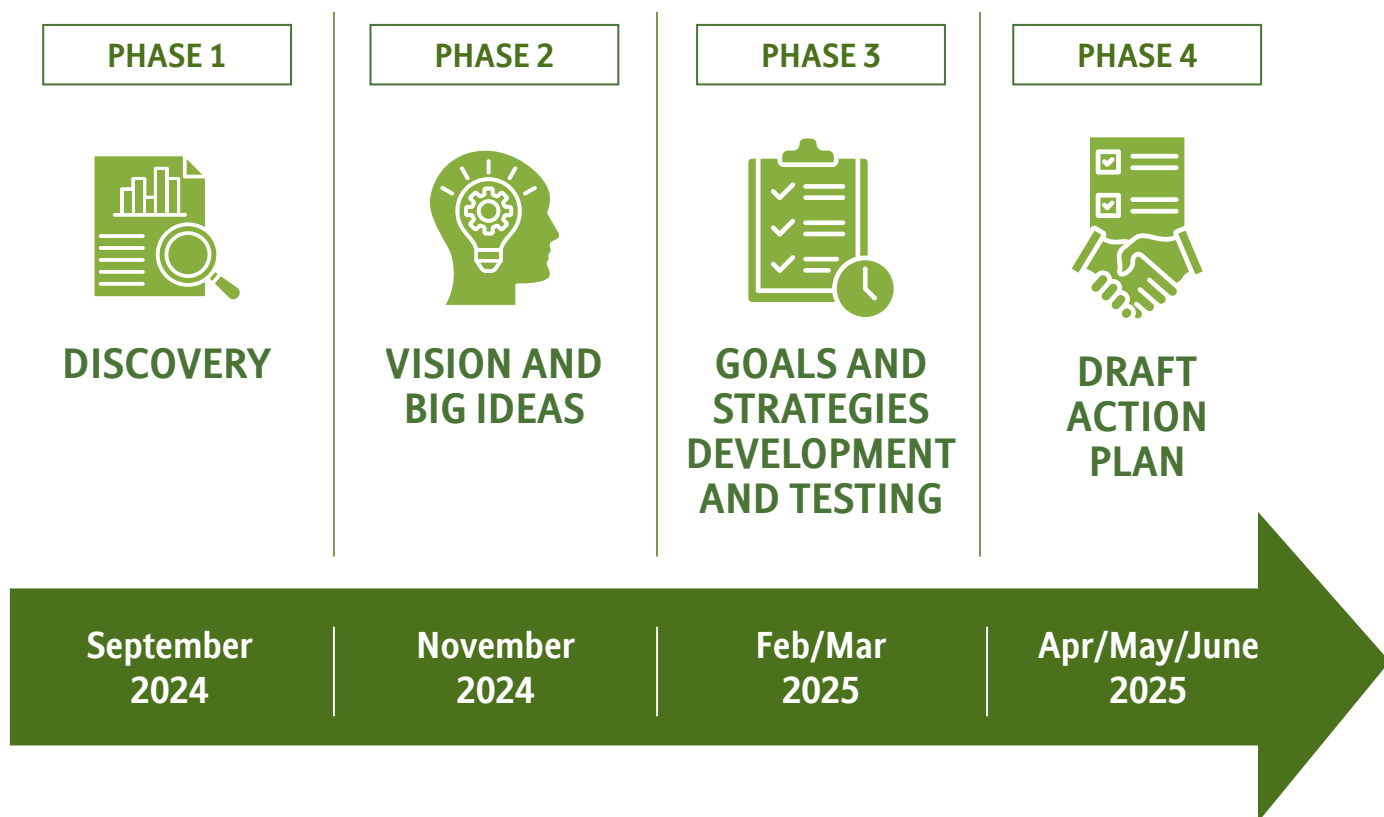




# STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

This Strategic Vision and 10-Year Action Plan was initiated in June 2024 by a partnership between Seattle Center and the Seattle Center Foundation (the Partners). Over the past year, the Partners, with the advice and consultation of the Kitchen Cabinet and many contributors, have engaged in a dynamic process of robust research and analysis to create a new future for Seattle Center. There were four phases to the process, with creative and thought-provoking workshops at the end of each phase. The research underlying the recommendations in this plan is summarized below in Key Findings: Challenges and Opportunities.

## Planning Phases and Timeline



# PLANNING PHASES

## Creating a New Future for Seattle Center



### PHASE 1: Discovery

September 2024

The consultants and Partners analyzed the patterns and trends in operating revenue, capital expenditures and lines of business over the past two decades, giving the Partners and the Kitchen Cabinet insight into Seattle Center’s financial and operating model over time and how that has contributed to its current financial condition. The consultants also conducted an initial review of best practices from 25 cultural and entertainment facilities in other cities with similar challenges and opportunities to Seattle Center and identified five that had successful structures and programs for a more in-depth analysis. These findings were discussed in Kitchen Cabinet Work Session #1.



### PHASE 2: Vision and Big Ideas

November 2024

Following the input from the Discovery Phase, the consultants and the Partners drafted potential goals, identified key factors influencing Seattle Center’s future and developed a range of potential “Big Ideas” that might shape Seattle Center’s strategy. At Kitchen Cabinet Work Session #2, the members discussed options for Seattle Center’s future financial sustainability, identified success drivers, confirmed the goals for the Strategic Vision and Action Plan and prioritized the Big Ideas.



## PHASE 3: Goals and Strategies Development and Testing

February - March 2025

With ideas and direction from the Kitchen Cabinet and constituent groups, the consultants and the Partners updated Seattle Center’s vision, mission and values, and drafted goals and strategies. They also identified possible phasing for essential priorities for Seattle Center to advance the Strategic Vision and Action Plan. At Kitchen Cabinet Work Session # 3, the Vision, Mission, Values, Goals and Strategies were refined and prioritized, potential sustainable funding models were discussed in-depth and future actions for Seattle Center and the Seattle Center Foundation were explored.



Photo: Megan Ching, Seattle Monorail Services



Photo: Janet Chapman



## PHASE 4: Draft Action Plan

April - June 2025

The consultants and Partners integrated the diverse range of ideas and findings from the three phases of work into a draft Strategic Vision and Action Plan for Seattle Center. The draft plan was reviewed and finalized at Kitchen Cabinet Work Session #4, along with an in-depth discussion of next steps including an outreach and engagement strategy to stakeholders and the broader community.



# KEY FINDINGS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Introduction

Seattle Center is a significant community asset and a center of arts, culture, sports and civic engagement, drawing millions of visitors every year. It is also a department of the City of Seattle, and as such is charged with managing City-owned properties and facilities for the primary benefit of the public, City taxpayers and Seattle Center’s many tenants, partners, patrons, and visitors.

However, as Seattle Center looks toward the future, it faces critical challenges that threaten its sustainability and role as the region’s cultural heart. Through research, analysis and extensive discussion, the Partners and the Kitchen Cabinet identified three key findings that have shaped the strategies outlined in this plan.

### Key Findings:

1. The future of Seattle Center and its cultural organizations is increasingly at risk due to funding challenges
2. Seattle Center faces critical repair and infrastructure needs
3. Seattle Center can learn from and apply best practices from peer organizations across the country







Photo: Janet Chapman



Photo: Seattle Center



Photo: Seattle Center



Photo: Janet Chapman

# KEY FINDING 1

## The future of Seattle Center and its cultural organizations is increasingly at risk due to funding challenges

### A. Scarce public funding and an unsustainable financial structure

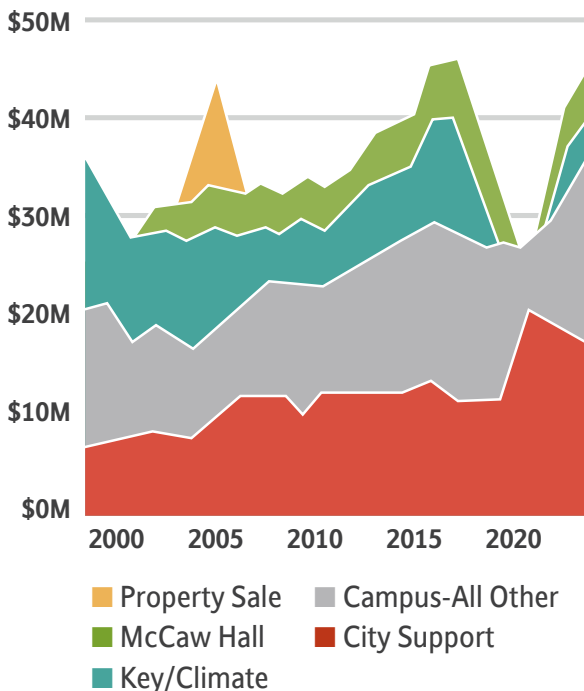
Seattle Center has the characteristics of a social enterprise organization in that it leverages earned revenue to reinvest in free and affordable programming and high quality public spaces and experiences. Over the past 20+ years, 50%-70% of operating costs to fulfill Seattle Center’s public purpose have been supported by earned income from business activities. The City of Seattle has

provided the balance of operational funding and most of Seattle Center’s capital funding.

Today, this financial structure is increasingly unsustainable. Operating costs have outpaced earned income growth as well as current public funding.

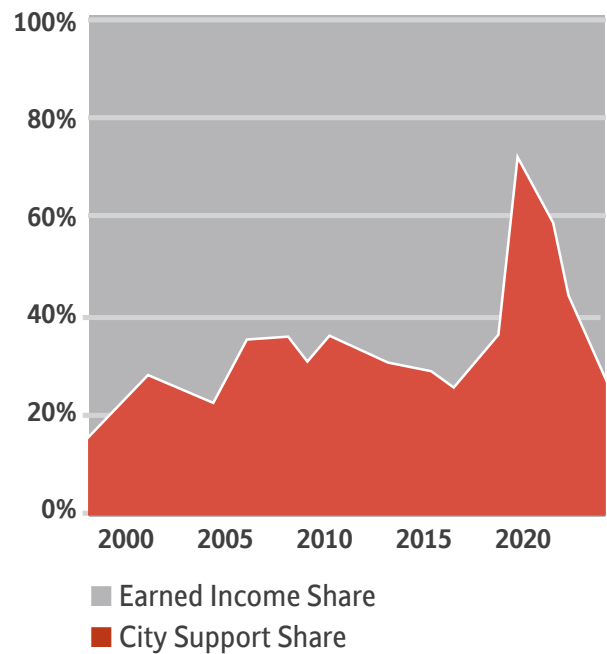
- Since 2000, operating revenues (a combination of earned revenue and public funding) have only increased by 27%, while inflation would have required a 71% increase (see Figure 1–Revenue History 2003-23).

Figure 1  
Revenue History 2003-23



Source: Habile Consulting LLC

Figure 2  
Revenue Shares 2003-23



Source: Habile Consulting LLC



- Earned revenue dependency has risen from 47% to 69% of the operating budget in the period from 2000 to 2023 (see Figure 2–Revenue Shares 2003-23).
- Costs associated with operating the campus and producing events have driven up costs for visitors, tenants, and event producers, threatening Seattle Center’s accessibility, affordability, and competitiveness.
- While there are opportunities to grow earned income and increase operating margins, Seattle Center is constrained in how much revenue it can generate while also achieving its public objectives.
- Available public funding, which helps support day-to-day operations and public programming, has not kept pace with current costs and inflation.
- Seattle Center’s source of public funding has primarily been the General Fund, which is under increasing pressure to fund essential City services like public safety and is regularly subject to reduction in economic downturns.
- Seattle Center has not had access to dedicated public funds from levies or other voted measures, which comparable community assets like the Seattle Aquarium, Seattle Public Library, Woodland Park Zoo, and Waterfront Park all have (Figure 4 on page 19–Seattle Examples: Revenue Source Summary Comparison).





## B. Seattle Center's role as the cultural heart of the Pacific Northwest is in jeopardy due to the financial insecurity in the arts and cultural sector, and regional competition

Seattle Center's ecosystem of arts and cultural organizations is at risk due to financial insecurity across the sector. Seattle Center also risks losing event and audience diversity as event producers increasingly consider cheaper regional venues. Significant reinvestment is needed for Seattle Center to remain the diverse cultural heart of the Pacific Northwest and an anchor for this important economic sector. Key issues include:

- The success of Seattle Center is tied to the success of its partner organizations, but these organizations are struggling financially and need assistance. If Seattle Center wants

to retain its role as the cultural heart of the Pacific Northwest, it needs new strategies to financially support current and future arts and cultural organizations.

- Seattle Center's attractiveness as a venue for events and festivals is at risk due to on-site production costs and parking rates, particularly for small and up-and-coming organizations, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. There is a risk of losing events and audiences to cheaper regional venues, resulting in less diversity and innovation at Seattle Center.
- There is an opportunity for more campus-wide coordinated services and management. Coordinated strategies for marketing, ticketing, and measuring economic impact would help strengthen the Seattle Center campus identity, reduce costs to partner organizations, and demonstrate community benefit.



Photo: Elizabeth Crook

# KEY FINDING 2

## Seattle Center faces critical repair and infrastructure needs

Public sources of funding have provided essential support for Seattle Center’s capital program needs over the years. However, this City support is subject to shifts in policy and fiscal priorities, competition for revenues, and increasing demands on City services. Since 2000, these fiscal challenges have constrained Seattle Center’s capital budget.

Capital preservation investments over the past two decades covered only 50%, or less, of the identified needs. This has led to project deferrals, degradation of conditions for critical systems, and increases in emergency repairs (see Figure 3 on page 18–Capital Investment Summary). Seattle Center’s core facilities, building systems and infrastructure, many dating back to the 1962 World’s Fair, are at–or approaching–the end of their useful life.

In addition, Seattle Center has long played an important role in the City’s plans for emergency preparedness thanks to its central location and its large facilities like the Armory, Fisher Pavilion and Exhibition Hall. These venues serve as shelters in extreme weather and in the case of a large-scale city-wide emergency. Focused investment to fully prepare Seattle Center’s infrastructure for this role in emergency response has not been possible at current levels of capital funding.

An urgent challenge is to reinvest in Seattle Center’s facilities, systems, and properties. The last major voter-approved levy to support the entire Seattle Center campus was 34 years ago, in 1991. A subsequent levy in 1999 focused on just two new facilities.



*Photo: Janet Chapman*



Figure 3

**Seattle Center Capital Investment Summary 2003-23** in millions of YOES\$

Type of Investment	Total
Preservation & Replacement	\$87.9
Improvements	\$133.8
<b>Total Capital Investment</b>	<b>\$221.8</b>
<b>Preservation Share</b>	<b>40%</b>
Preservation Funding vs Target	Total
Preservation Target	\$173.8
<b>Preservation Gap</b>	<b>\$85.8</b>
<b>Percentage of Target Funded</b>	<b>51%</b>

Source: Habile Consulting LLC

**Historical Levy Funding:**

**1991:** Voters approve a \$25.8M levy for implementation of the Seattle Center 2000 Master Plan.

**1999:** Seattle voters approve Proposition 1 providing \$36M for two new facilities—Marion Oliver McCaw Hall and Fisher Pavilion.



Photo: Seattle Center

Figure 4

**Seattle Examples:** Revenue Source Summary Comparison

Sources	Seattle Center	Seattle Public Library	Seattle Aquarium	Woodland Park Zoo	Waterfront Park	Pike Place Market
City Funding	✓	✓		✓		
Funds Raised by Partner Non-Profit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local Improvement District					✓	
City Library Levy 2020-2026		✓				
King County Parks Levy 2020-2026			✓	✓		
Seattle Parks District Levy 2023-2028			✓	✓	✓	
Pike Place Market Levy-Capital 2009-2014						✓

Source: Seattle Center



# KEY FINDING 3

## Seattle Center can learn from and apply best practices from peer organizations across the country

Seattle Center can learn from other arts, culture, sports and entertainment organizations, and apply these best practices to its unique constraints and opportunities (see Figure 5—Examples of Other Models).

### Best practices from these models include:

#### A. Funding strategies that incorporate diverse and flexible revenue sources, including significant private funding, and public funding streams that are predictable and stable.

- For example, Denver Arts and Venues is a city and county public agency funded by ticket revenue from its six venues and also relies on other public support. This includes sales tax from the seven county Scientific and Cultural Facilities District, and support from the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts and Colorado Creative Industries fund, a state agency. These additional public funds, combined with Denver Arts and Venues' earned revenue, support the rich and diverse programs of the Denver Public Arts Program.

#### B. Management/partnership agreements, cultural/arts strategic plans and economic impact studies that help to show clarity of mission, purpose, and roles and responsibilities for the organization and partners.

- The Dallas Arts District spans 68 acres over

19 contiguous blocks in Downtown Dallas and includes five museums, 12 performing arts venues/organizations, and 14 commerce and culture venues. The District partners (the City Office of Arts and Culture, the Dallas Arts District Foundation and the Klyde Warren/Arts District Public Improvement District) have been guided by a series of master plans since 1987. The plans include strategies for design, growth, neighborhood connections, marketing, and measuring economic impact. The clarity of vision and partner roles described in the plans is a major contributor to their success.

#### C. Umbrella organizations that provide a comprehensive approach to campus management and additional resources for planning, marketing, management and fundraising for the campus, as well as funding for partner organizations.

- Like Seattle Center, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) is a publicly owned entity whose vitality is driven by its renowned arts organizations. Through

its robust private fundraising, LCPA can offer additional services and programs that support, complement, and expand the audiences and offerings of its partner organizations. LCPA provides coordinated marketing and ticketing, campus promotions, a website that serves all

the partner organizations, unrestricted support to partner organizations, production of over 100 music, dance, visual art, comedy and spoken word events, and a Leadership Fellows program to develop a pipeline of board members for LCPA partner organizations.

Figure 5

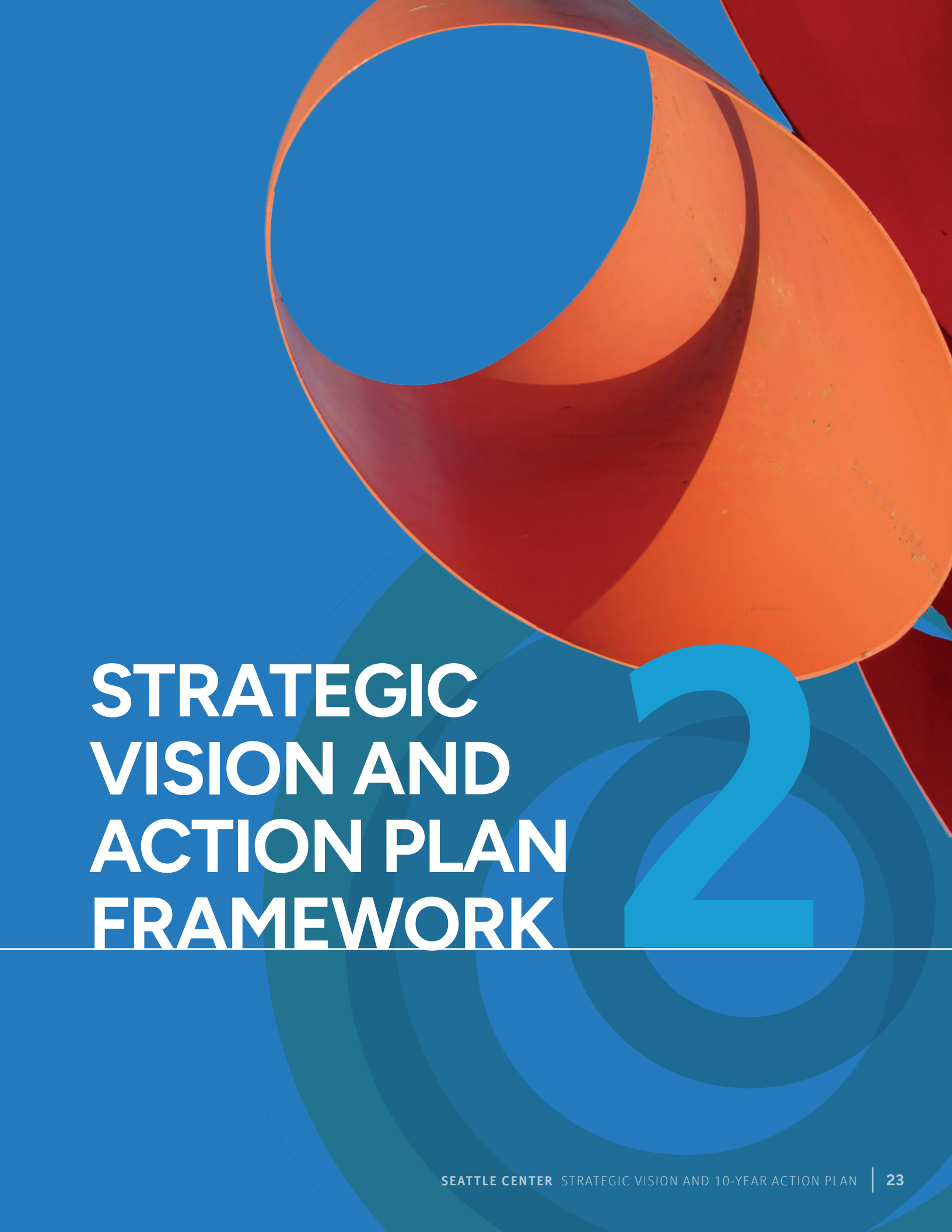
**Examples of Other Models**

A Campus-wide Nonprofit Arts Producer, Funding, and Management Organization	A Social/Cultural Public Enterprise Fund	A Nonprofit and a Business Improvement District that Manage an Urban Arts District	A City Department that Manages Venues and Funds Events	A Nonprofit that Manages a Complex City Park and Raises Significant Funds	A Non-Profit that Funded and Raises Program Funds for a City Owned, and Managed Park
<p><b>Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts</b></p>	<p><b>Denver Arts and Venues</b></p>	<p><b>Dallas Arts District Foundation/Klyde Warren/AD PID</b></p>	<p><b>Tacoma Venues and Events</b></p>	<p><b>Central Park Conservancy</b></p>	<p><b>City Of Chicago/ Millennium Park Foundation</b></p>
<p>Presents artistic programming</p> <p>Supports its resident organizations</p> <p>Provides arts education</p> <p>Leads community relations</p> <p>Manages the center’s campus</p> <p>Manages redevelopment projects</p>	<p>Manages six venues</p> <p>Oversees the Denver Public Arts Program</p> <p>Funds implementation of Denver’s Cultural Plan</p> <p>Produces and supports cultural events</p> <p>Revenue (from venue ticket sales) \$67M in 2024</p>	<p>The City Office of Arts and Culture, the Dallas Arts District Foundation, and the Klyde Warren/ Arts District Public Improvement District partner to manage the Dallas Arts District</p> <p>Jointly implement the CONNECT Arts master plan</p>	<p>Manages the Tacoma Dome, Greater Tacoma Convention Ctr Cheney Stadium; Pantages and Rialto Theatres, Theater on the Square</p> <p>Department includes Office of Arts &amp; Cultural Vitality, Tacoma Creates, and Special Events</p> <p>Tacoma Arts Live is a partner non-profit</p>	<p>Conservancy employees tend to the Park’s complex maintenance, restoration, and architectural needs—from horticulture to tree and turf care, trash management, visitor services, and much more</p>	<p>The Millennium Park Foundation assisted in the design and construction of the park, and secured the donations that funded its construction</p> <p>The Foundation continues to secure private donations to fund additional programs and further enhance Millennium Park</p>

Source: MIG, Inc.







# STRATEGIC VISION AND ACTION PLAN FRAMEWORK

# SEATTLE CENTER VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

The planning process for this Strategic Vision and 10-Year Action Plan provided Seattle Center with an opportunity to establish a new Vision statement, and to update and re-commit to the organization's Mission and Values.

## VISION

**Seattle Center is where community comes together—an iconic, inclusive destination that delights and inspires the human spirit.**

## MISSION

**Seattle Center operates vibrant gathering places and venues, creates exceptional events and experiences, and anchors our arts and cultural community.**

Seattle Center achieves this by:

- Bringing our region's many communities together in a safe, welcoming, and inclusive place
- Maintaining, operating and reinvesting in public spaces and venues that are beautiful, state-of-the-art, environmentally sustainable, and resilient
- Enabling our arts, culture, sports and entertainment organizations to thrive, innovate, and better serve our communities

## VALUES

### **A Welcoming and Joyful Experience**

We are a place for **fun, creativity, and innovation** for people of all ages, abilities and cultures, where everyone feels safe and that they belong.

### **An Inclusive Community**

We provide **support for programming, arts, culture, sports, and entertainment** that represents the history and diversity of Seattle.

### **A Commitment to Service and Our Staff**

We deliver **uplifting and professional service** to our guests, clients, partners and each other with a focus on transparency, accountability, and integrity.

### **Doing Well to Do Good**

We **leverage earned revenue** to reinvest in free and affordable programming and high-quality public spaces and experiences.

### **Honoring Our Past, Shaping Our Future**

We **steward Seattle Center's unique history** while continuing to grow and lead with a clear vision for the future.



# GOALS

With clarity from the guiding statements on the previous page, and the input of constituents and stakeholders throughout this planning process, the Partners have established three Goals that frame Seattle Center's path to the future. These Goals guide the strategies and the overall Strategic Vision and Action Plan.



# THE BIG MOVES

Core to achieving the three Goals is a set of three “Big Moves,” each advancing one of the Goals and unlocking a set of Strategies to follow. The Big Moves are intended to quickly leverage resources, organize collaborations and connections, and catalyze the changes necessary for Seattle Center and its partners to have a thriving future.

## BIG MOVE #1

Establish a  
\$100 million  
Seattle Center  
Endowment.



**CULTURAL  
HEART**

## BIG MOVE #2

Advocate for a  
comprehensive  
capital levy  
proposal for the  
Seattle Center  
campus



**GATHERING  
PLACE**

## BIG MOVE #3

Support Seattle  
Center’s role as a  
social enterprise  
organization



**FINANCIAL  
SUSTAINABILITY**

# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AT-A-GLANCE

## VISION

**Seattle Center is where community comes together – an iconic, inclusive destination that delights and inspires the human spirit.**

## MISSION

**Seattle Center operates vibrant gathering places and venues, creates exceptional events and experiences, and anchors our arts and cultural community. Seattle Center achieves this by:**

- Bringing our region’s many communities together in a safe, welcoming, and inclusive place
- Maintaining, operating, and reinvesting in public spaces and venues that are beautiful, state-of-the-art, environmentally sustainable, and resilient
- Enabling our arts, culture, sports, and entertainment organizations to thrive, innovate, and better serve our communities

<p><b>GOAL I: Advance Seattle Center as the region’s heart for arts, culture, sports, and civic engagement</b></p> <p>Seattle Center is the anchor for Seattle’s creative community, where our patrons and partner organizations are supported in their success. Seattle Center offers the partnerships and resources to enable a diversity of innovative artists, creators, performers, athletes and event producers.</p>	<p><b>GOAL II: Boldly reinvest in Seattle Center’s public spaces</b></p> <p>Seattle Center operates high-quality public spaces and facilities, on campus and at Waterfront Park, that meet the highest standards of maintenance and public safety and have the infrastructure they need to serve our community in emergencies. Seattle Center is connected to surrounding neighborhoods, downtown, and the waterfront with iconic gateways, lighting, and wayfinding.</p>	<p><b>GOAL III: Secure Seattle Center’s long-term financial sustainability</b></p> <p>Seattle Center is a social enterprise organization that leverages earned revenue to support public programs, has reliable public funding, and utilizes private funding to deliver a range of public benefits to our community. The Seattle Center Foundation is a strong partner and effective advocate for Seattle Center and its partner organizations.</p>
<p><b>BIG MOVE #1 Establish a \$100 million Seattle Center Endowment</b></p>	<p><b>BIG MOVE #2 Advocate for a comprehensive capital levy proposal for the Seattle Center campus</b></p>	<p><b>BIG MOVE #3 Support Seattle Center’s role as a social enterprise organization</b></p>
<p><i>Strategies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Support creativity, innovation, and diverse programming on campus</li> <li>B. Develop new shared services that benefit partner organizations</li> <li>C. Expand accessible, affordable, inclusive experiences and public programming</li> </ul>	<p><i>Strategies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Create new gateways and connections</li> <li>B. Enhance the green heart of the Seattle Center campus</li> <li>C. Address Seattle Center’s critical infrastructure needs and make the campus carbon neutral</li> </ul>	<p><i>Strategies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Ensure reliable public funding</li> <li>B. Increase earned revenue</li> <li>C. Expand private funding to invest in public access and programs</li> </ul>





# GOALS AND STRATEGIES

# 3





# GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Achieving the three overarching Goals of this plan will be contingent on the three initial Big Moves. As the Big Moves happen and resources are brought to bear, Seattle Center and the Seattle Center Foundation will be ready to cascade their work into the Strategies. These Strategies identify the specific activities, programs, and creative ideas that the Partners will undertake to bring each Goal fully to life, enabling Seattle Center's Vision.



# GOAL I

## Advance Seattle Center as the region's heart for arts, culture, sports, and civic engagement

Seattle Center is the anchor for Seattle's creative community, where our patrons and partner organizations are supported in their success. Seattle Center offers the partnerships and resources to enable a diversity of innovative artists, creators, performers, athletes, and event producers.

### **BIG MOVE #1: Establish a \$100 million Seattle Center Endowment**

The Seattle Center Foundation is already taking steps towards this ambitious goal, from doing the work with board and staff to transform organizational capacity, to laying groundwork for stakeholder support and lead gifts, to exploring goals and governance with Seattle Center. As the endowment is raised and grows over time, its impact will be felt at Seattle Center through the strategies on the following pages.



## STRATEGIES UNLOCKED BY BIG MOVE #1:

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### A. Support creativity, innovation, and diverse programming on campus

Purposefully support and incubate the creative growth and development innovations of partner organizations, emerging event producers, and BIPOC and youth artists.

#### Ideas to implement this strategy:

- **Deepen support for diverse arts, festivals, events, and installations** by providing more opportunities for funding, mentoring, and incubating new projects alongside Seattle Center’s long-standing support with staff, expertise, and equipment.
- **Develop an integrated plan** with partners to enhance arts and culture at Seattle Center by describing programs, experiences, facilities, management, urban design, and economic development metrics that will support a robust, equitable, and inclusive arts and culture ecosystem.

### B. Develop new shared services that benefit partner organizations

Seattle Center and the Seattle Center Foundation will work closely with partner organizations to leverage new collaborations to provide campus-wide services.

#### Ideas to implement this strategy:

- **Advance projects that provide** benefits for multiple organizations, including campus-wide marketing and ticketing platforms, new programming, youth and emerging artists internships, transportation and parking programs and incentives, and strategies to integrate back-of-house functions across organizations.
- **Promote Seattle Center as the center of a vibrant neighborhood arts district** by developing new partnerships between Seattle Center and its Uptown, South Lake Union, Belltown, and Queen Anne neighbors for collaborative marketing, business development, and mobility programs. These partnerships would promote all the opportunities in the area—housing and retail as well as arts, culture, entertainment, and sports.

### C. Expand accessible, affordable, inclusive experiences and public programming

Increase resources to provide robust public benefits, including community access to a wide variety of activities and experiences at Seattle Center.

#### Ideas to implement this strategy:

- **Increase affordable options** by expanding family-friendly, free, and affordable entertainment options year-round, including investing in cultural outreach and other



awareness strategies to expand audiences, and by addressing challenges around parking affordability, such as for families and those for whom transit isn't an option.

- **Turn Seattle Center “Inside Out”** by experimenting with bringing programming inside venues on campus outside in exciting and experiential ways. Allow all visitors to engage with these experiences by creating new outside programming, artistry, technology, and building design.
- **Provide opportunities for youth and emerging artists** by developing collaborations with partner organizations to offer internships

and training for low-income artists, and youth from underrepresented communities.

- **Install exciting, innovative, and engaging art across the campus**, harnessing the power of art to engage, educate, heal, and energize. Building on the campus' public art collection, and the “Artists at the Center” program, expand Seattle Center's reputation as a place for artists to do their most innovative work.
- **Make the campus fully accessible and easy to navigate** by providing accessible options and wayfinding throughout, for people of all abilities.



Photo: Susan Fried



# GOAL II

## Boldly reinvest in Seattle Center's public spaces

Seattle Center operates high-quality public spaces and facilities, on campus and at Waterfront Park, that meet the highest standards of maintenance and public safety, and have the infrastructure they need to serve our community in emergencies. Seattle Center is connected to surrounding neighborhoods, downtown, and the waterfront with iconic gateways, lighting, and wayfinding.

### **BIG MOVE #2: Advocate for a comprehensive capital levy proposal for the Seattle Center campus**

A generational reinvestment in Seattle Center is urgently needed to repair and restore Seattle Center's beloved venues and infrastructure to make the campus safe, resilient and delightful for the next generation of visitors, and to enable expansions and improvements that will benefit the public long into the future.



*Photo: Marc Jones*

## STRATEGIES UNLOCKED BY BIG MOVE #2:

### A. Create new gateways and connections

Seattle Center will be easily accessible to its adjacent neighborhoods and Waterfront Park by reducing barriers and making entrances attractive and appealing.

#### Ideas to implement this strategy:

- **Implement the “Lake to Bay Loop” trail system** to connect Seattle Center to South Lake Union and the Waterfront. The trail would include spaces to exercise, relax and enjoy our beautiful natural setting, safe and easy places to walk and run, separate bike lanes, and amenities and access to parks and cultural activities.

This would leverage the current Thomas Street project and include investing in a new Broad Street connection to the Olympic Sculpture Park and Waterfront Park.

- **Improve Monorail connections** by creating a new front door to Seattle Center from downtown, through upgrading the Seattle Center Station and reimagining the Westlake Station to enhance connections to Westlake Plaza and the Westlake Light Rail Station.
- **Create iconic gateways** to the Seattle Center campus that enhance the sense of arrival to campus, upgrading pedestrian paths, and marking campus gateways with public artwork and landscaping. Seattle Center entrances will be visible and easily accessible from the neighborhoods, and have exciting designs and art that draw visitors in and bring them to the heart of the campus.





## B. Enhance the green heart of the Seattle Center campus

The center of the Seattle Center campus—the International Fountain and surrounding lawns—will be renovated as an iconic, beautiful, fun, and celebratory space that continues to draw hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors each year. Infrastructure for concerts and events will be dramatically improved, along with accessibility and sight lines to make this one of the most welcoming and memorable public green spaces in the region.

### Ideas to implement this strategy:

- **Preserve and enhance the International Fountain, the Fountain and Fisher lawns, and the Pacific Science Center courtyards and arches** that have been an iconic part of Seattle Center since the 1962 World's Fair. Seattle Center will reinvest in these important amenities with new art, designs and technology to keep the features people love, and make sure they are safe, accessible, and magical for years to come.
- **Install plug-and-play event infrastructure** that provides up-to-date power, water, connectivity, utilities, and equipment, making events easy and affordable for arts, sports, culture and event producers, meeting the demanding criteria of national and international users, and powering immersive arts experiences.
- **Children's Play 2.0** would use the latest research on children's play, materials and features to enhance and expand on the

Artists at Play playground to include more free family activities and experiences.

- **Invest in exciting lighting and technology installations** to captivate visitors and activate spaces, providing fantastic and engaging installations and experiences on campus.

## C. Address Seattle Center's critical infrastructure needs and make the campus carbon neutral

- **Invest in environmental sustainability strategies** that move the campus away from fossil fuels and better prepare Seattle Center to serve the community in an emergency, providing better safety and security and completing critical maintenance projects.

### Ideas to implement this strategy:

- **Fund deferred capital maintenance** by proposing a comprehensive capital levy that will invest in critical capital preservation and replacement projects, and install new technology and safety improvements to bring aging facilities up to current standards. This would include reinvestment in McCaw Hall, upgrades to the Armory and Exhibition Hall and Pacific Science Center Plaza, and deferred maintenance across the buildings and grounds.
- **Become a carbon-neutral Eco District** by investing in sophisticated green strategies including decarbonization, green design, energy use and recycling, with the goal of becoming a net-zero cultural campus



by 2032. This will accomplish three goals simultaneously: realize major carbon emissions reductions in the State's largest urban area; modernize aging utility infrastructure to last through the 21st Century; and engage the public and campus visitors with the Eco District project to bolster Seattle's reputation as a leader in sustainable energy.

- **Enhance the capabilities of Seattle Center facilities for their role in emergency response** by upgrading the Armory, Exhibition Hall, and other key facilities to better provide sheltering and other services to the public in an emergency.



*Photo: Janet Chapman*



# GOAL III

## Secure Seattle Center’s long-term financial sustainability

Seattle Center is a social enterprise organization that leverages earned revenue to support public programs, has reliable public funding and utilizes private funding to deliver a range of public benefits to our community. The Seattle Center Foundation is a strong partner and effective advocate for Seattle Center and its partner organizations.

### **BIG MOVE #3: Support Seattle Center’s role as a social enterprise organization**

A social enterprise organization is one that generates revenue from various sources in order to serve a public purpose. Seattle Center, while a City Department, is essentially a social enterprise organization. As Seattle Center and City leaders acknowledge and celebrate this unique business model, the decisions and strategies needed to diversify funding sources—public, earned and private—will gain momentum and acceptance. These changes will enable Seattle Center to thrive long term, as it continues to serve the public at both the Seattle Center campus and Waterfront Park.



## STRATEGIES UNLOCKED BY BIG MOVE #3:

### A. Ensure reliable public funding

Seattle Center engages in many public functions supported in part with public funds—from management, security and maintenance of public spaces and facilities, to funding public programs, to in-kind services and below market rents for non-profit organizations. More diverse and reliable public funding, in addition to general fund support, will enable Seattle Center to continue and expand these efforts for the public good.

#### Ideas to implement this strategy:

- **Enable Seattle Center to retain budget surpluses in a reserve account.** Currently, any annual operating surplus that Seattle Center generates is held in a fund balance by the City and not usable by the department. Retaining departmental budget surpluses when they occur could enable:
  - » A rainy-day fund to be established to provide funding stability over time.

- » Flexible funding to address emerging needs and support opportunities that arise within a budget cycle.

- **Work with the City to forgive the interfund loan.** Seattle Center has been required to carry the costs of the KeyArena closure, plus COVID-related services to the City, as a loan. Those services included sheltering and vaccination during COVID, as well as critical rent-abatements for partner organizations. The loan balance is currently \$15.9M; forgiving this loan would allow Seattle Center to put funds otherwise being used for debt service payments into public-facing services such as operations, public programming, and capital replacement.
- **Work with the City to develop additional revenue streams to provide stable, predictable public funding.** Efforts would focus on capturing tax revenue streams generated by Seattle Center and Waterfront Park to fund operations and public programs, as well as leveraging other public funding tools where possible (see page 40 Figure 6–Potential Public Revenue Sources).





Figure 6

**Potential Public Revenue Sources**

<b>Seattle Center Needs to Remain Publicly Accessible</b>	
<p><b>Seattle Center is engaged in many public functions that have traditionally been supported with public funds:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management, security, and maintenance for public spaces and facilities</li> <li>• Subsidies for public programs</li> <li>• In-kind services and below market rents for non-profit organizations</li> </ul>	<p><b>These public functions should continue to be publicly funded.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business activities on campus also generate significant revenue streams for the City</li> <li>• There are other sources of public funding that have a clear nexus to Seattle Center and its resident organizations, tenants, patrons and visitors</li> </ul>
<b>Public Revenues that Could Be Targeted to Support Seattle Center Public Functions</b>	
<p><b>Major Tax Revenue Streams Generated on Campus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City portion of sales tax generated by Seattle Center tenants and businesses</li> <li>• City portion of the leasehold excise tax on Seattle Center tenants</li> <li>• Admissions tax generated by Seattle Center tenants and businesses</li> <li>• Local utility taxes on utilities purchased by Seattle Center’s businesses, campus tenants, and other on-site businesses</li> <li>• Local B&amp;O tax generated by Seattle Center tenants , contractors, other on-site businesses, and suppliers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Public Funding That Has a Nexus to Seattle Center Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism sales taxes in the Seattle Tourism Impact Area</li> <li>• Seattle Parks District funding that aligns with Seattle Center’s park maintenance functions</li> </ul>

Source: Habile Consulting LLC

## B. Increase earned revenue

Align Seattle Center's lines of business with clear operational, financial, and public service goals to improve performance, accountability and impact.

### Ideas to implement this strategy:

- **Organize Seattle Center lines of business** and reporting functions according to:
  - » Activities that are primarily commercial in nature—where there is an ability and willingness to pay for the service provided.
  - » Activities that are primarily public in nature—where the service or function is either integral to Seattle Center's role as a public entity or is provided as a policy choice by City decisionmakers.
  - » Activities that are a mix of the above—where there are both public reasons for providing the service and a willingness and ability to pay for the service provided.
- **Optimize revenue streams** throughout each line of business, such as parking, event/program management and support, property leases, and facility fees.

- **Examine and adjust Seattle Center's departmental authority** where needed to enable appropriate flexibility in setting prices and terms for each line of business.

## C. Expand private funding to invest in public access and programs

### Ideas to implement this strategy:

- **Expand sponsorship opportunities** on campus that meet marketing objectives and enhance earned revenue. By developing creative partnerships, Seattle Center can expand audiences and creative programming.
- **Produce an annual fundraising event** that builds awareness and support in the community for Seattle Center and Seattle Center Foundation programs and impacts. Funds generated by this event would increase resources for public programs on campus.
- **Increase grant funding** to support free and affordable public and youth programs.



Photo: Janet Chapman



*Photo Credit: Saddleburn Media*





# ACTION PLAN

# 4

*Photo Credit: Saddleburn Media*

# 10-YEAR ACTION PLAN

The following are the recommended next steps and timeline for moving the Strategic Vision and Action Plan for Seattle Center forward.

<p><b>Summer 2025- Year End 2026</b></p>	<p><b>Build community awareness about the benefits of Seattle Center and implement early wins to build momentum for the Strategic Vision and Action Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roll out the Strategic Vision and Action Plan to build excitement— Summer/Fall 2025</li> <li>• Secure input and support from City leadership and key stakeholders</li> <li>• Update Economic Impact Study to provide data to support public funding proposal for Seattle Center campus and Endowment campaign—Fall 2025</li> <li>• Complete and celebrate International Fountain repairs—Fall 2025</li> <li>• City Council Endorsement of the Strategic Vision and Action Plan— Year End 2025</li> <li>• Elevate Seattle Center’s Annual Community Impacts Report—Early 2026</li> <li>• Leverage lead-up to World Cup Fan Celebration—Summer 2026</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summer 2025– Year End 2026</b></p>	<p><b>Build support for a comprehensive capital levy proposal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure input and support from City leadership and key stakeholders</li> <li>• Initiate in-depth planning, including financial plan and timeline— Summer 2025</li> <li>• Develop and execute campaign (Seattle Center Foundation)—2026</li> <li>• Potential Council action on levy proposal—Summer 2026</li> <li>• Potential Public levy vote—Fall 2026</li> </ul>

<p><b>Fall 2025– Year End 2027</b></p>	<p><b>Develop Endowment with philanthropic community (Seattle Center Foundation)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete an Endowment feasibility study, develop strategy–2025</li> <li>• Initiate Endowment donor conversations–late 2025, early 2026</li> <li>• Initial Endowment gifts tied to City’s consideration of public funding measure–late 2025, early 2026</li> <li>• First grants from Endowment–2027</li> </ul>
<p><b>2026 and 2027</b></p>	<p><b>Pursue campus-wide strategies that support partner organizations and enhance Seattle Center’s brand and visibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate Seattle Center ticketing bundles and promotions–2026</li> <li>• Campus-wide marketing and promotion–2026-2027</li> <li>• Innovation grants to partner organizations–2027 and ongoing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ongoing</b></p>	<p><b>Enhance Seattle Center’s financial sustainability with key changes to funding and financial operations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus Rainy Day Fund, diversify funding–2025 budget</li> <li>• Advance line of business strategies and recommendations to optimize earned revenue–2026</li> <li>• Plan ahead for new public funding sources to supplement the General Fund–late 2027 and 2028</li> <li>• Continue implementing the strategic ideas for all three Goals as success builds in the initial years of plan execution</li> <li>• Revise plans and strategies where needed as conditions change</li> </ul>









Photo: Seattle Center

