

The Case for
Creating the
SE Seattle
Economic
Opportunity
Center

2014



THE CASE FOR CREATING THE SE SEATTLE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY CENTER

SE SEATTLE: A HISTORY OF ISOLATION AND NEGLECT, AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PROGRESS

SE Seattle is a predominantly low-income and multicultural mix of neighborhoods with a history of isolation, neglect, and unmet needs for accessible and effective education, job creation and business services. The advent of five light rail stations will help end the neighborhood's isolation, and create a new opportunity to establish an accessible Economic Opportunity Center that can help people get an education, get a job, or grow a business.

WHY IS AN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY CENTER NEEDED?

- SE Seattle has pent up potential for economic growth: immigrant entrepreneurial energy, youth, diversity – but is held back by lack of accessible, culturally appropriate access to education, good jobs, and business services.
- National research confirms that people and business start-ups experience greater economic growth when they can access multiple services in one location. The Opportunity Center for Employment and Education on the North Seattle Community College campus, has shown how integrated services help people succeed.
- Interviews with community leaders and residents show strong support for an Economic Opportunity Center, and its creation is consistent with existing neighborhood plans.

WHAT WOULD THE SE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY CENTER INCLUDE?

First and foremost, the Center would ensure that all program staff are culturally competent, that major languages of the area are fully accommodated, and that services are tailored to the area's needs.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

- A new Seattle Vocational Institute campus could work in partnership with the Seattle Jobs Initiative and the WSU Small Business Development Center or Renton Technical College to create job- and skill-specific classes.
- Programs that help people learn job skills and English simultaneously, known as I-BEST Programs can help people complete courses quickly.

CULTURALLY COMPETENT JOB AND BUSINESS SERVICES

- A culturally competent one-stop business development center with expertise and partnerships could include the WSU Small Business Development Center, Start Zone NW, the Southeast Seattle Effective Development (SEED), the Rainer Valley Capital Development Fund, and the UW.
- A range of employment services would be provided, such as WorkSource and DePaul Industries, which connects people to temporary jobs with employer incentives to make them permanent.
- A possible business anchor tenant could provide jobs onsite.
- Partnership with Neighborhood House to house the City's new Financial Empowerment Center could provide financial education to individuals.

Once established, the SE Economic Opportunity Center could continue to grow and add services that help this community become a vibrant center of economic growth and individual success that transforms SE Seattle.

NEXT STEPS

The results of this preliminary investigation suggest a one-stop location for residents to get an education, get a job, or develop a business is needed and desired in Southeast Seattle. There is enthusiasm to move forward with creating an Opportunity Center and the following have been identified as next steps.

1. Share findings broadly among stakeholders for feasibility and feedback.
2. Continue discussions with partners, including those who originally expressed interest, to confirm timelines and determine program space needs.
3. Task an appropriate organization to create a predevelopment budget to include the identification of appropriate parcels for the Opportunity Center and assemble resources necessary for site acquisition.
4. Investigate funding possibilities and identify funding sources from public and private entities for further project advancement.
5. Augment and develop this report based on the results from discussions with partners and the community. Outline further processes for engaging the community and collecting input moving forward.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PARTNERS

COMMUNITY CORNERSTONES

Community Cornerstones implements the vision of the Southeast Seattle community for their future as detailed in recently adopted Neighborhood Plans. \$3 million from a HUD Community Challenge Planning Grant and \$5.9 million in local public and private sources are funding a new model for equitable development that supports the existing economically and culturally diverse residents and businesses while also welcoming new ones.



GROW SEATTLE

Seattle's Office of Economic Development (OED) supports a healthy business environment and empowers companies to grow and compete. They provide services directly to businesses through advocacy, retention and expansion assistance, and workforce development. OED's program to invest in neighborhood business districts is the Only in Seattle initiative, which works with businesses, property owners and other community leaders to organize around a common vision for a business district and attract investment.



IMPACT CAPITAL

Impact Capital is an intermediate lender providing credit, financial, and technical assistance to non-profit community development organizations and underserved communities across Washington. Working with partners, their goal is to transform distressed communities into vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable neighborhoods. They make strategic capital investments to improve the quality of life for residents in our region.



SEED

Founded in 1975, SouthEast Effective Development (SEED) is a not-for-profit community development corporation. Through their Housing and Economic Development Programs, their mission is to improve the quality of life in Southeast Seattle by creating partnerships and inspiring community investments. SEED believes that making a difference in our community is a lifelong commitment.



SKILLUP WASHINGTON

SkillUp Washington partners with post-secondary and workforce systems to increase education attainment and to build the talent pipeline of skilled workers in high-demand fields, such as manufacturing. Working together with community colleges, business, philanthropy, and the public sector, SkillUp aligns workforce training programs with industry needs and provides the training necessary for adults to earn a living-wage job.



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SkillUp Washington is Seattle's workforce education funders' collaborative. For more information about SkillUp, please visit:

www.skillupwa.org



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