



Commercial Affordability Workshops

Seattle is experiencing unprecedented growth that has created significant wealth and prosperity. At the same time, small businesses are grappling with affordability issues that challenge their ability to grow and remain competitive. The City of Seattle – Office of Economic Development (“OED”) recognizes that commercial affordability means more than affordable rent and requires a comprehensive approach to support small businesses with consulting, financing, and policy initiatives.

Pilot Program:

OED is piloting a commercial affordability workshop series in Chinatown – International District – Little Saigon. Rapid changes are occurring in the area with several developments in the pipeline. The primary languages spoken in this neighborhood are Vietnamese, Mandarin, and Cantonese. To help ensure equitable access to these workshops, translation of materials and interpretation services for outreach and for people attending the workshops are included. The workshops are intended to help support small businesses as they evaluate their options whether to remain in their current location or lease new space. The workshops have been co-designed with Shanti Breznau of Seattle Chinatown International District PDA and consultants to tailor the workshops to fit the neighborhood’s needs in the following areas:

- Qualifying for a Commercial Lease (12 small business participants – December 2017)
- Commercial Design Workshop (19 small business participants – April 2018)
- 1-on-1 Design Clinic (12 available appointments – June 2018)
- Financing Workshop (September 2018)
- Commercial Lease Workshop (December 2018)
- 1-on-1 Commercial Lease Clinic (1Q 2019)

Moving Forward:

Pending results of the Chinatown-ID-Little Saigon workshops, demand from other neighborhood business districts and available budget, OED will consider expansion of commercial affordability workshops to other areas. This model is intended to be adaptable and the topics and attendance for workshops and clinics may be different for each neighborhood depending on the capacity and identified needs from the on-the-ground partner.