

Update to Citywide Business Improvement Area (BIA) Policies

Office of Economic Development

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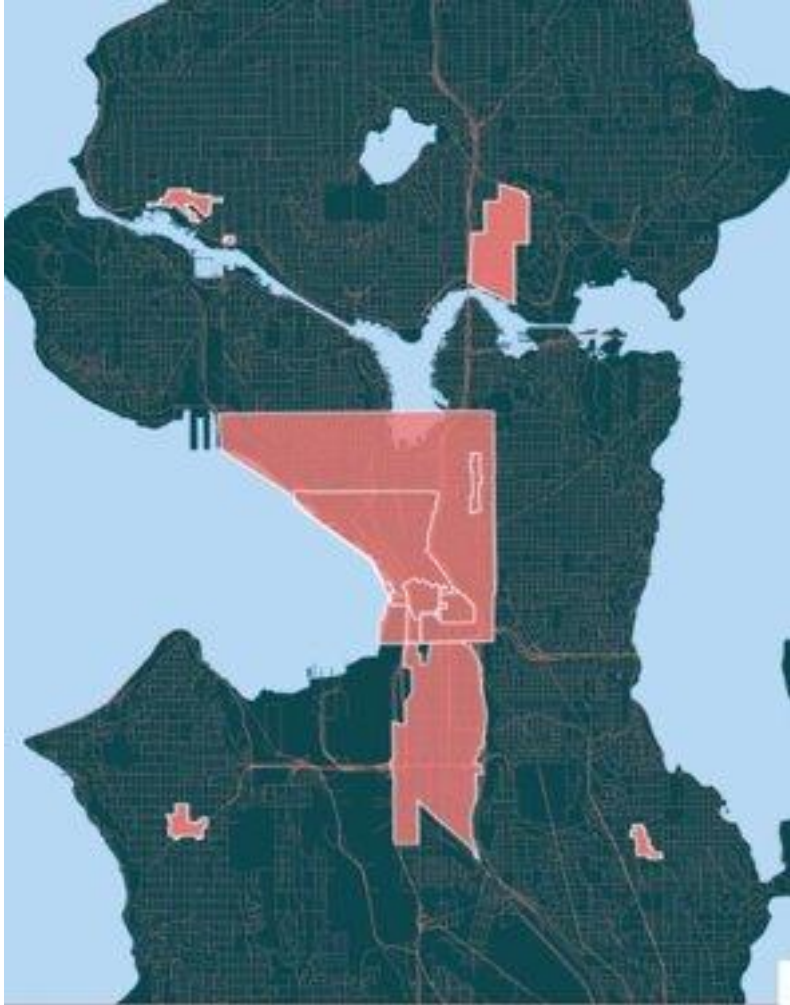
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What are BIAs (Business Improvement Areas)?

- Funding mechanisms for business district revitalization and management
- Key activities include:
 - Clean and Safe Programs
 - Marketing and Promotion
 - Business and Economic Development
 - Public Realm Improvements and Planning
 - Advocacy
 - Professional Management and Organizational Development

BIAs in Seattle



- There are currently 11 BIAs:
 - 15th Avenue East
 - Ballard
 - Broadway
 - Chinatown/International District
 - Columbia City
 - Downtown
 - Pioneer Square
 - Seattle Tourism Improvement Area
 - SODO
 - University District
 - West Seattle Junction
- OED staff coordinating with district partners to form BIAs in:
 - Judkins Park
 - Phinney/Greenwood
 - Pike/Pine

Policy Background

- Citywide BIA Policies guide existing and potential BIAs
- Businesses or property owners pay annual assessments
- Governed by ratepayer Advisory Board
- Most BIA ordinances include a sunset date and undergo a “renewal” process, which has required 60% approval from ratepayers via petition process

Stakeholder Engagement

- OED worked with BIA Directors and city staff over 2025 to identify potential improvements to the Citywide Policies
- Key Feedback:
 1. The Citywide Policies could be restructured and clarified to make it easier to understand the city's process and requirements
 2. The petition process and 60% approval threshold is burdensome and doesn't make sense for minor changes or just extending the sunset date
 3. Interest in clarifying the policy for assessing government-owned properties that benefit from BIA services

Key Changes to Citywide BIA Policies

Refines the policies for clarity and user-friendliness:

- Adds details and checklists for the process and requirements to establish or modify a BIA
- Adds details about the ongoing roles and responsibilities for the BIA, OED, and City Finance
- Restructures the document, new definitions, and other non-substantive changes to improve readability

Key Changes to Citywide BIA Policies

Renewing BIAs:

- Adds recommendation, not requirement, to include a sunset date
- Explains when a “renewal” requires either a modification of the BIA ordinance or dis-establishing and re-establishing the BIA
- BIAs may extend the sunset date through the less burdensome modification process, as long as there are only minor changes
- Dis/re-establishment still required for:
 - Major changes in the BIA boundaries (noncontiguous or changes >10%)
 - Changes in a benefit zone

Questions?

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