



City of Seattle
Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

June 28, 2005

Contact: Martin McOmer, 206-684-8358 / Cell: 206-423-34541
Karin Zaugg, 206-733-9810, cell: 206-465-8387

Mayor reconvenes Task Force to help continue economic growth

SEATTLE – Mayor Greg Nickels reconvened his Economic Opportunity Task Force today to report on the City’s implementation of the Task Force’s 2002 recommendations, and to request the Task Force create a new set of recommendations for continuing to improve Seattle’s business climate.

“We’ve focused on creating a business-friendly climate at the City, by making it easier to do business and being proactive about our competitiveness,” said Nickels. “We’ve made significant investments in transportation and in our neighborhoods to ensure Seattle’s economic prosperity into the future.”

The mayor noted that since the Task Force issued its recommendations in July, 2002, the City has completed or made substantial progress on over 80% (60 out of 69) of the recommendations.

A number of the Task Force recommendations focused on transportation, simplifying the land use code and implementing economic development programs for distressed business districts.

“Our efforts have focused on the fundamentals, such as removing City codes and regulations that got in the way of private investment, and making sure that all residents benefit from the jobs and opportunities created in areas like the Rainier Valley,” said Nickels.

“The Mayor has focused on growing key industry sectors and supporting job growth in those industries,” said Steve Williamson, Executive Secretary of the King County Labor Council and Task Force Co-Chair. “Making sure that our workforce is prepared for the jobs of the future is a critical piece to our region’s continued economic success.”

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“The Mayor took our recommendations seriously, and not just for supporting big business, but small business too,” said Tricia Murphy, President of Urban Fitness and Task Force member. “I’m impressed with the follow-up and implementation.”

Some additional highlights of the three-year report include:

- Secured \$2B in State funding for the Alaskan Way Viaduct.
- Broke ground on light rail construction with first alignment in Southeast Seattle to Sea-Tac Airport.
- Invested \$28M in capital projects to keep freight moving.
- Reduced review times for simple and complex construction permit applications.
- Reduced residential parking requirement in First Hill, Pike/Pine, Broadway and the University District to align with market demand and lower the cost of new housing.
- Removed restrictions on UW off-campus leasing of office & research space.
- Implemented strategies to revitalize the Broadway Business District including a new neighborhood Farmer’s Market and zoning/code amendments to encourage mixed-use redevelopment.
- Established \$50M Community Development Fund to support Rainier Valley businesses impacted by light rail construction, with \$6.2M disbursed to date.
- Established Business Advocate and Industrial Permit Liaison services. To date, more than 500 city businesses assisted.
- Invested \$2M in the development of apprenticeship preparation program for construction positions created by the building of Light Rail in Southeast Seattle, 80 residents enrolled to date.
- Established the *SeattleFirst* manufacturing attraction and retention program.
- Reduced cost of filming in the City and established a uniform \$25 permit fee resulting in a 50% increase in film permits issued.

“The City’s economic outlook is much brighter, but we must continue to meet new challenges and opportunities to secure our economic future,” said Mayor Nickels in asking Task Force members to continue working on his economic development agenda.

“The City has made great strides in addressing many of the issues we’ve raised,” said Joe Quintana, Managing Partner of IndexGroup, a Seattle-based strategic communications consulting firm, and Task Force Co-Chair. “We will continue to work with the City to strengthen our jobs base and keep our local economy competitive.”

The Mayor created the Economic Opportunity Task Force, the 39-member group of business, labor, education and community leaders, in March, 2002. The Task Force issued 69 recommendations for ways the City could re-invigorate Seattle’s economy and expand its job base in July, 2002.

To learn more about the Economic Opportunity Task Force and the mayor’s efforts to improve Seattle’s business climate, visit the mayor’s website at www.seattle.gov/mayor.

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