

PIONEER SQUARE ALLEY DESIGN STANDARDS

Using Nord Alley and Pioneer Passage as a testing ground, this project defined a new vision for Pioneer Square's alleys that was compelling to contemporary users, yet also found a adaptable treatment tailored to the neighborhood's rich heritage.

1973 | WITH HISTORY LAYERED BELOW

As a legacy of the Great Seattle Fire, numerous areas ways exist underneath the streets and sidewalks of Pioneer Square. While none appear to exist in Nord Alley or Pioneer Square, they do exist along the perpendicular streets and will need to be considered in any proposed design.



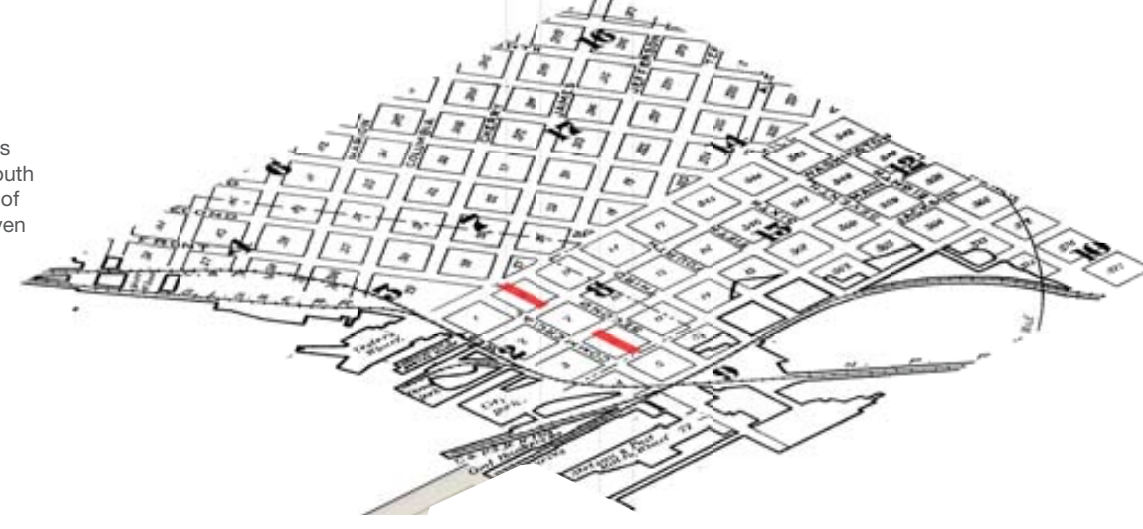
1905 | SURROUNDED BY TRANSIT

For the first time, Nord Alley and Pioneer Passage appear in their current configuration, with street cars (thin lines with small black dots) threading throughout Pioneer Square.



1893 | REBUILT IN BRICK

The wood buildings surrounding current Nord Alley and Pioneer Passage were burned down in the Great Seattle Fire of 1889. New buildings were soon to emerge, made of fire resistant brick.

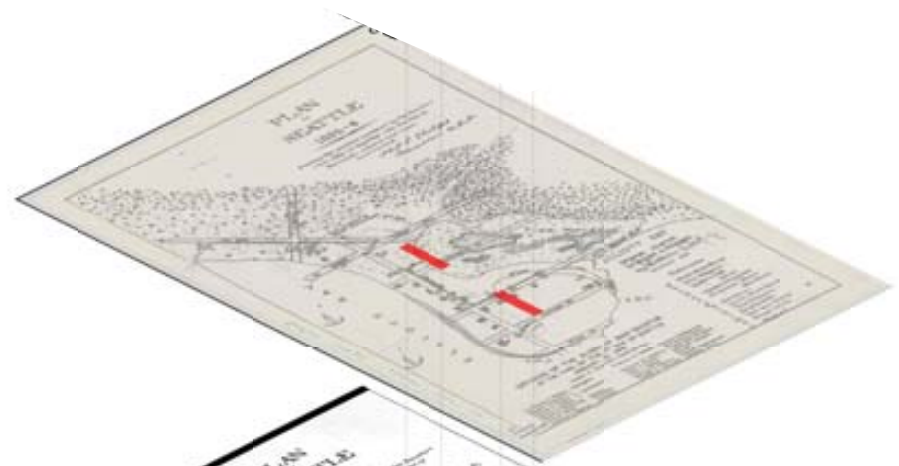


1888 | FRAMED BY WOOD

Just before the Great Seattle Fire, Seattle was booming with rail lines coming across the mouth of the Duwamish out to the wharfs and piers of Seattle's Central Waterfront. Alleys are not even marked on the maps.

1856 | INTO THE CITY

Nord Alley is no longer a primary street, replaced by current Occidental Way. Streets are becoming more formalized to the north.



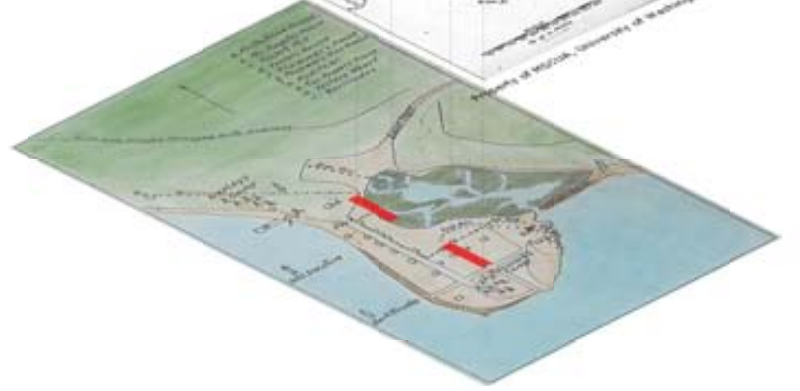
1856 | ONTO THE SAWDUST

Pioneer Passage emerges on the sawdust behind Yesler's Mill.



1855 | OUT OF THE MARSH

Nord Alley appears to be one of the original streets in Seattle; Pioneer Passage was largely marsh, soon to be filled.



ROOTED IN RESEARCH

Originally underlain by marshland, then topped by sawdust, unconsolidated fill, demolished burnt buildings, wood plank paving, subterranean areaways, speakeasies, boomtown brothels, intravenous needles, human waste and, most recently, the detritus from nearby paving projects.

"Food and drink"

"A place where people can come together and share a beautiful space"

"Canopy infrastructure. Modular trackscape."

"Link alleys and have mid-block crossings."

"Be loved by people of all demographics"

"A transformational other worldliness"

"Even paving for easy walking and bike"

"Turn underground windows/doors into light wells (or something interesting)."

"Have a plethora of micro retail"

"Live music and dancing"

"Social places"

"Rain water can be harvested, native plants reintroduced. Bring urban and ecological character together."

"Community accumulative art – everyone can add something – a lock, a drawing, a note."

"Yellow brick road in alleys."

"Surprises"

"Spaces for quiet contemplation over a glass of wine or coffee"

"The alley should hold events. My class at UW had art show called Alley Art Walk in the U District. There was music and food. It was a party. Do it!"

"More hanging green"

"Seem old yet new and be a place for utility, art, and gathering"

"Smoother surfaces so I could skateboard through them"

"Garbage free! Full of art!"

"Outdoor cafes"

"Communal spaces to grow food"

"A place to be... Not a place to pee."

"Lighting can be functional and beautiful. Art, safety, and it could be located to make a ceiling."

"More urban gardens"

"Active storefronts"

"Excitement"

"Live music and dancing"

"Night market at least twice a week"

"String lights above."



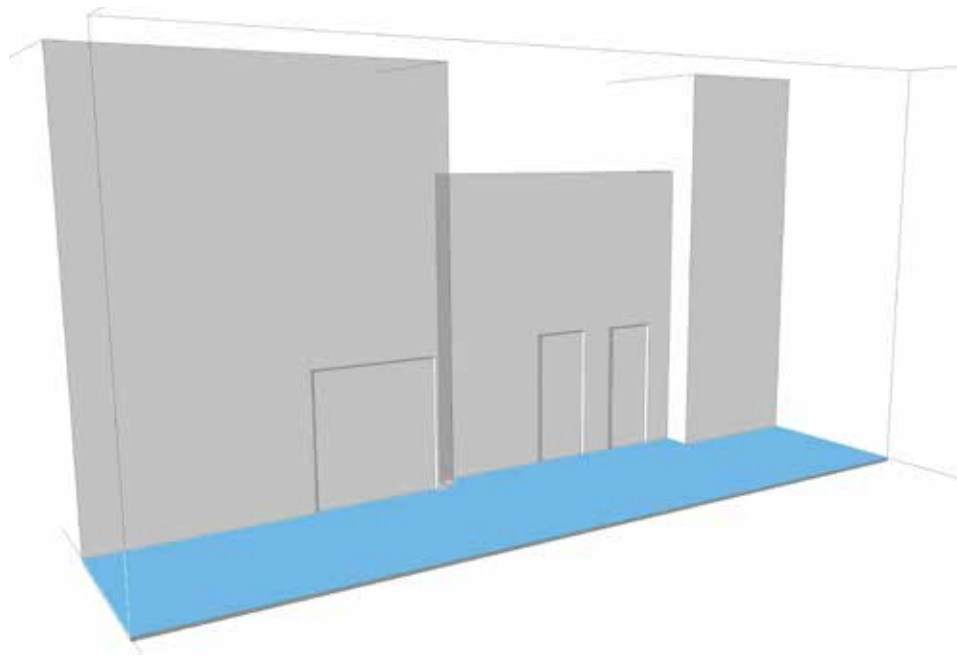
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Using whiteboard thought and speech bubbles during a First Thursday Art Walk in Nord Alley, community members shared what they loved and loathed about the alleys, and what their hopes were for the alleys' future.



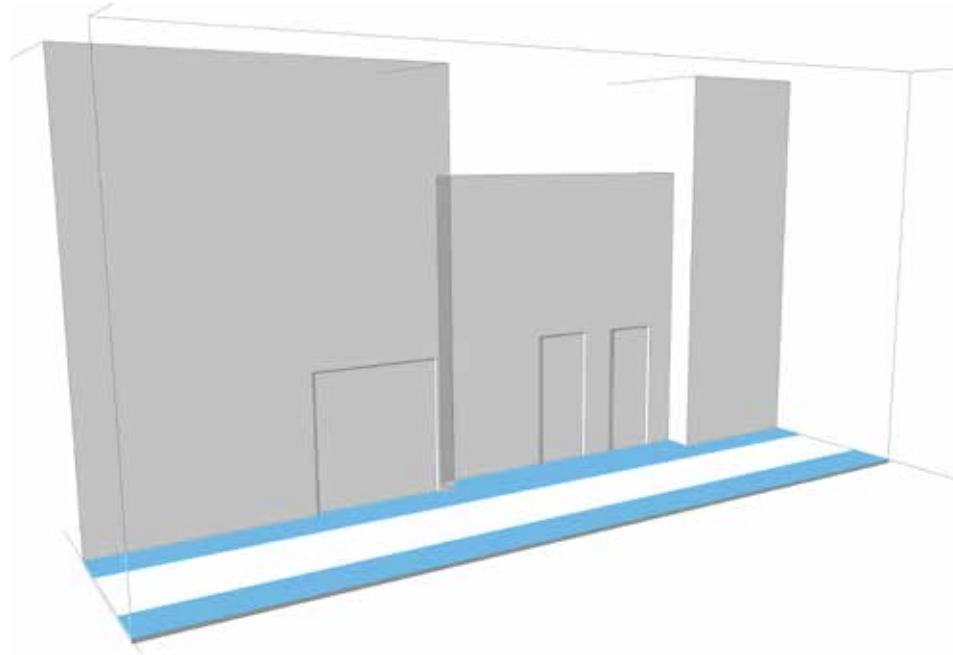
NIGHTSEEING TOUR

To counteract the persistent perception of the alleys as unsafe, the design team hosted a public "NightSeeing" tour of the alleys. The tour demonstrated the ways that even subtle changes in light affect our psychological perceptions of space, texture, safety and delight.



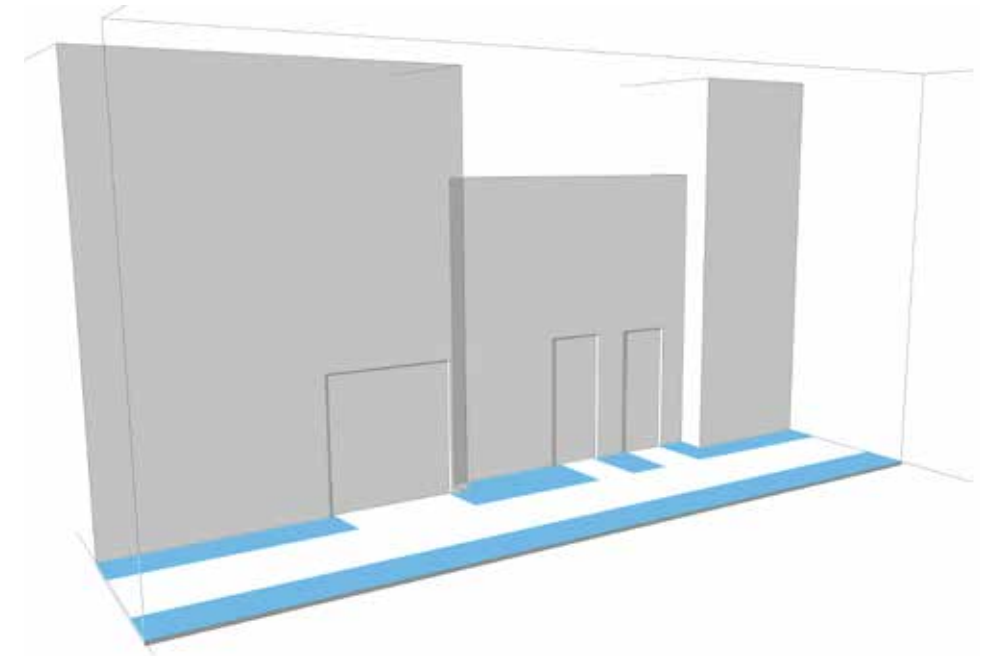
1 CONTINUOUS SURFACE

Create a continuous paved surface that is durable and that can be programmed by adjacent businesses.



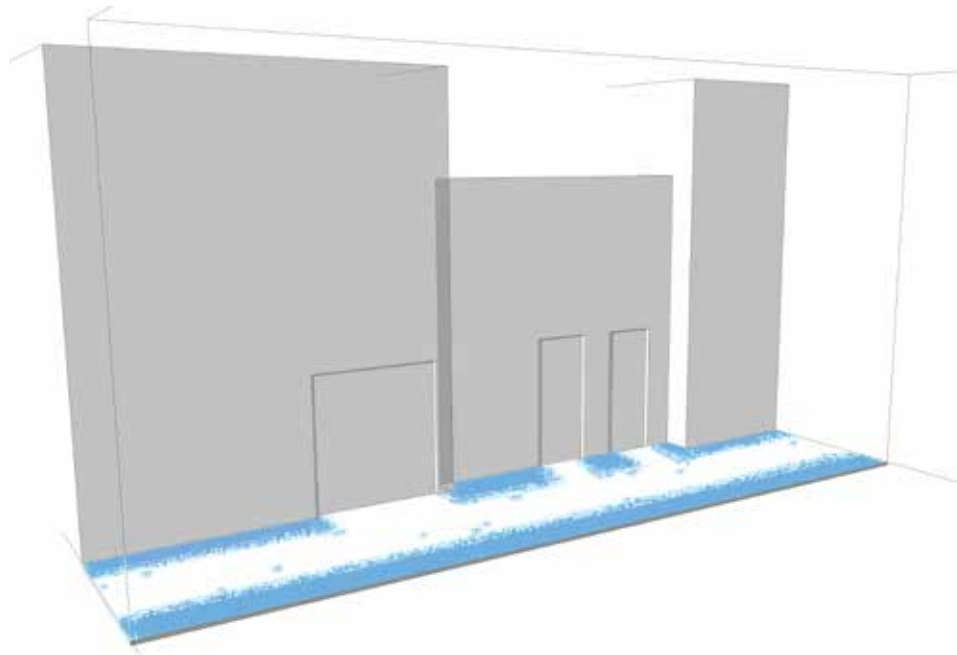
2 DRIVE AISLE VS PERIPHERY

Define a central drive/walk/ride aisle that is accessible with a peripheral space that can accommodate service and activation.



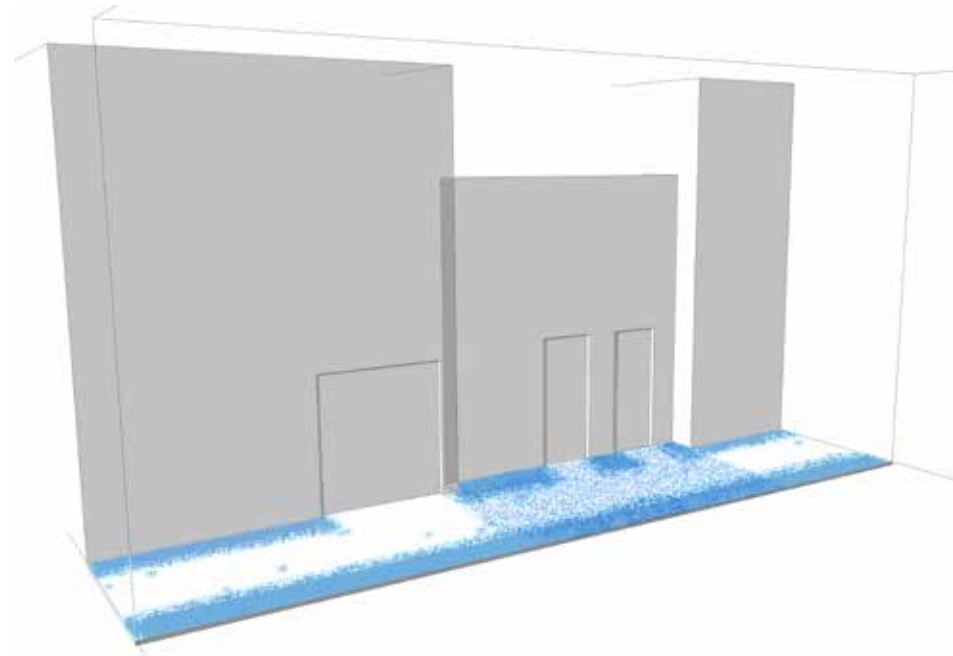
3 ENTRIES AND NODES

Where there are historic entries provide an accessible invitation for those doors to reengage the alley.



4 BLUR BOUNDARIES

Blur the boundaries between these spaces.



5 MIXING ZONES

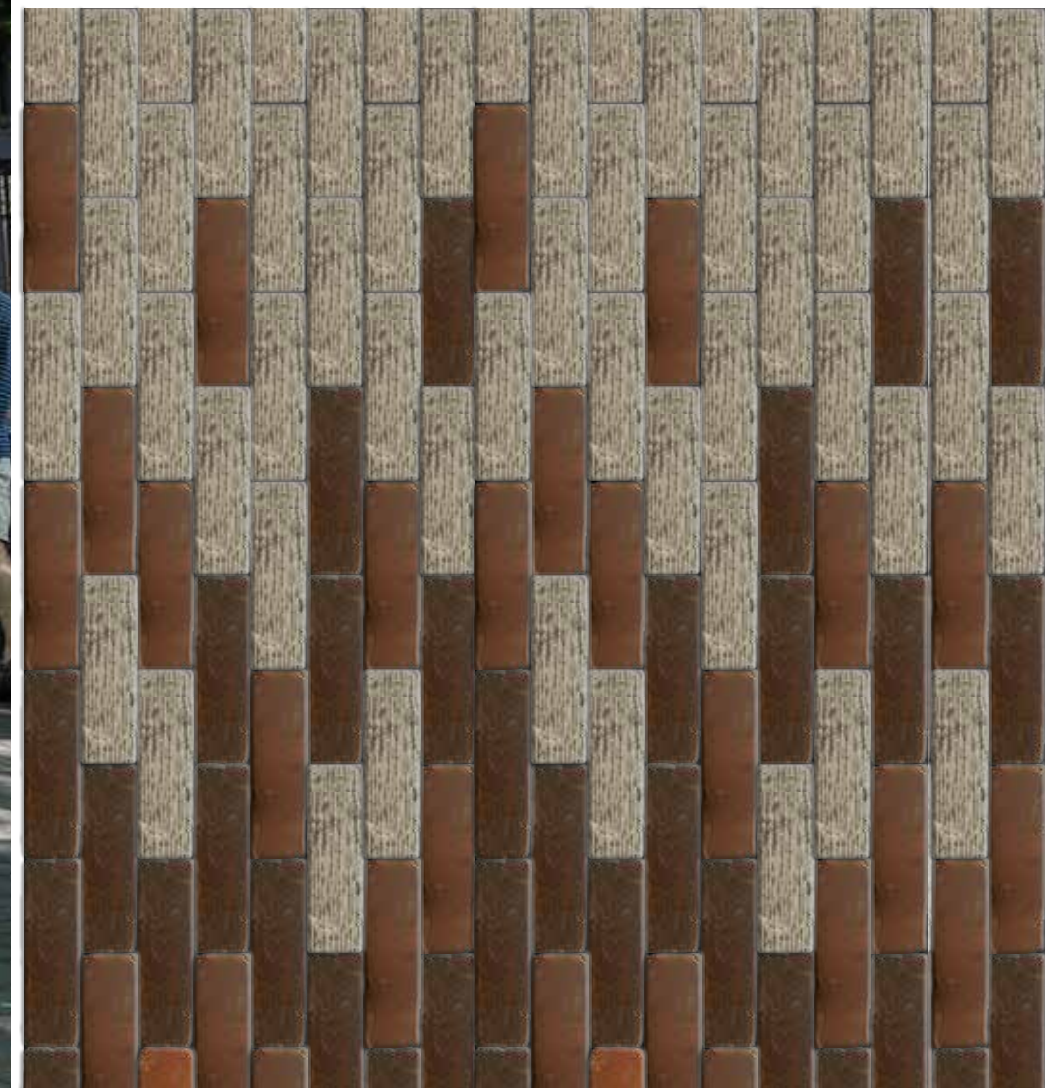
Where buildings step back from the alley right of way, define mixing zones that can be programmed.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

Taking input from the various stakeholders, the proposal for the alley employs five key strategies that are adaptable to the rest of the district's alleys.



- 1 Salvaged brick from alleys
- 2 Contemporary, custom clay brick
- 3 Contemporary, custom stone pavers with adze finish



MATERIALS

Turning to Pioneer Square's Richardsonian Romanesque facades for inspiration, the design team found intermixed brick and stone. The team transferred this palette to the alleys: salvaged brick pavers, mixed with contemporary, ADA-compliant clay bricks and granite pavers.



PIONEER PASSAGE BEFORE

The condition of Pioneer Passage when the design team began the project.



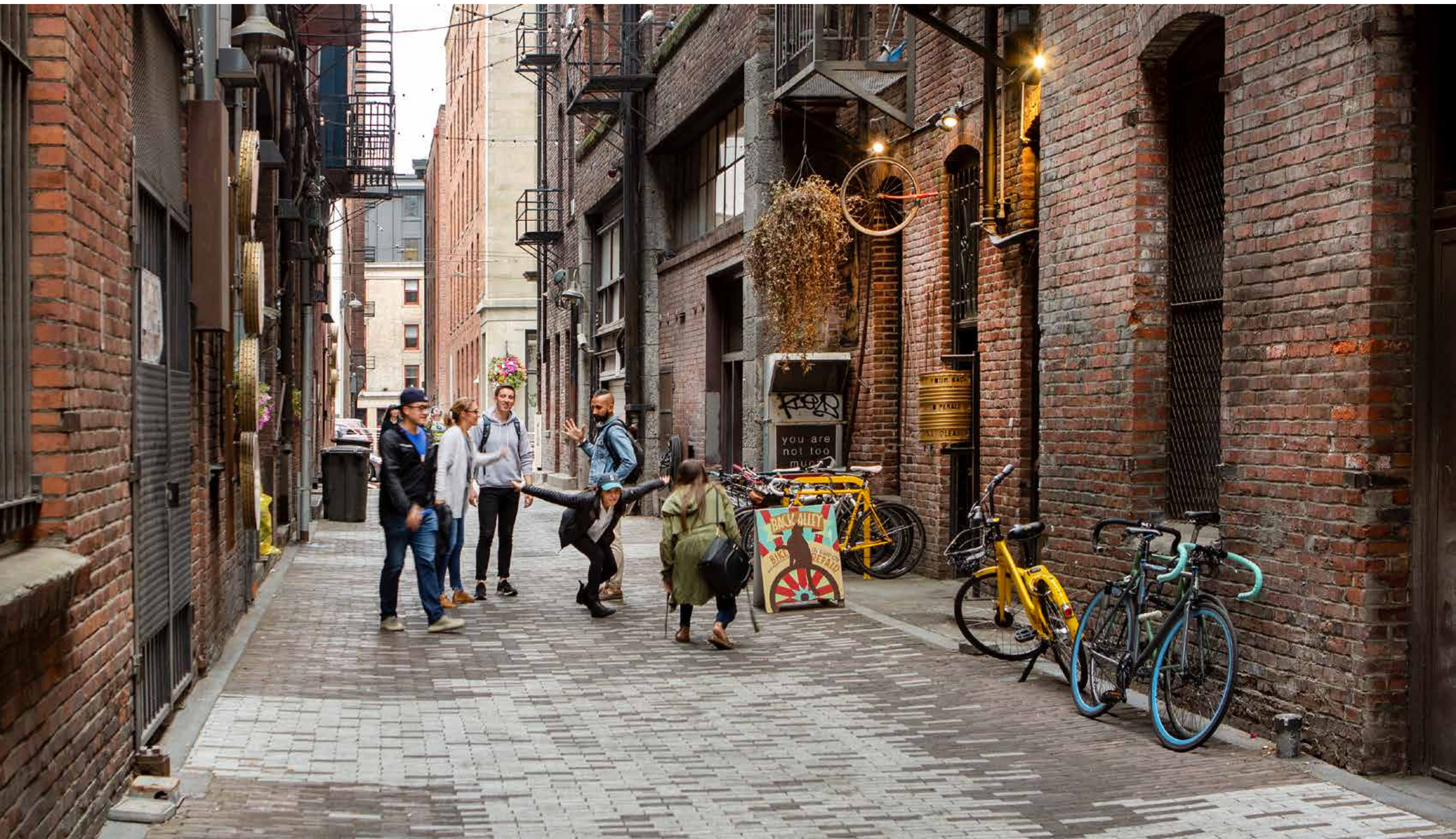
PIONEER PASSAGE TODAY

Architectural tour groups and diners co-mingle in Pioneer Passage's mixing zone today. The alcove to the right, where the restaurant is, is the same alcove as in the previous image.



NORD ALLEY FROM ABOVE

From above, the central aisle is clearly enclosed by the eddy spaces to the side. Stone pavers invite doors to open onto the alley as at right. The historic, non-ADA compliant bricks are at the edges of the alley and feather into the more contemporary clay and stone pavers. The mixing zone can be seen in the middle distance.



PHOTOGENIC SPACE

The alleys have become a hit for Instagram aficionados, posing in this compelling urban space.



A QUIET MOMENT

Quiet moments and compelling destinations can both be found in the alleys depending on the time of day one visits.



PIONEER PASSAGE BEFORE

Working a strand of molten glass, the artisans of Glasshouse Studio pull long glass rods in the alley near Back Alley Bike Repair.



NIGHT GALLERY

While a man takes in the alley art under the lights, his dog enjoys the new paving



JOYFUL NOISE

While diners look on, kids race through the alleys.



PIIONEER SQUARE ALLEYS DESIGN MANUAL

INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY INSTITUTE

OCTOBER 2015

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Accessibility for All
5' Minimum Consistent
Hard, Flat Surface

