



**Seattle** Office of  
Inspector General

---

# **Report Summary of the Sentinel Event Review of the Police Response to the Mayday USA Rally in Cal Anderson**

---

**May 12, 2026**

## About OIG

The Office of Inspector General for Public Safety (OIG) was established in 2017 as part of Seattle’s police accountability system. OIG provides oversight of the management, practices, and policies of the Seattle Police Department (SPD). In February 2026, OIG published the [Sentinel Event Review of the Police Response to the MayDay USA Rally in Cal Anderson](#).

## Introduction

The SER report presents an in-depth, community-centered review of the SPD response to the Mayday USA rally and counterdemonstration in Cal Anderson Park on May 24, 2025 (referred to hereafter as “the Event”).<sup>1</sup> OIG, in collaboration with a panel of community members and SPD, initiated a review to identify contributing factors resulting in the escalation of tension and conflict, arrests, and uses of force by SPD.<sup>2</sup>

The SER process is a collaborative effort to identify root causes of significant incidents and improve systems to prevent recurrence. SER does not assign individual blame or culpability.<sup>3</sup> OIG conducted a SER to assess the Event, evaluate the factors that contributed to the use of force and arrests, develop consensus recommendations to improve the facilitation of First Amendment rights in Seattle, and rebuild trust among SPD and community. Due to a breach of confidentiality by a panelist, the panel was unable to complete the review or develop consensus contributing factors and recommendations. The SER Report is a summary of the panel discussions, including findings and recommendations. The report was reviewed by many panelists but does not provide true consensus conclusions which would have been possible with group deliberation.

Panelists identified 66 contributing factors and 24 potential recommendations before the panels were discontinued. Discussions centered on the need for SPD to prioritize relationships and trust building with the community through consistent, equitable outreach. Nuanced understandings of community perspectives and concerns will improve the ability of SPD to assess accurate risk assessments, reduce anticipatory defensiveness, and appropriately differentiate between individuals in crowds to conduct targeted enforcement, limiting arrests and uses of force.

## Event Overview

On April 8, 2025, Seattle Parks and Recreation approved a permit for MayDay USA, a Christian fundamentalist movement, to hold a rally labeled “#DontMesswithOurKids” in Cal Anderson Park on May 24, 2025. The rally was part of a five-city tour promoting anti-LGBTQ+, anti-abortion, and advocating for “the sanctity of human life [and] the sacrality of biological gender.”<sup>4</sup> Many in Seattle expressed concerns leading to the Event, questioning why the City would grant a permit for the rally in the historic heart of the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>5</sup>

- 1 MayDay USA is a Christian fundamentalist movement.
- 2 The SER process is intended to gather and report community and SPD officer input and recommendations on protest response. This report does not contain legal conclusions.
- 3 OPA investigates allegations of employee misconduct relating to SPD policy and federal, state, and local law. OPA investigates complaints and recommends findings to the Chief of Police. OPA conducted seven investigations into allegations of officer misconduct on May 24.
- 4 [MayDay USA Seattle, WA | Christians Engaged – Pray Vote Engage](#).
- 5 The First Amendment places limitations on the ability of Seattle Parks and Recreation and the City to deny permit applications.

Hundreds attended the MayDay USA rally and hundreds of counterdemonstrators gathered to protest.<sup>6</sup> SPD used bicycle fencing to separate the rally venue and the counterdemonstration zone, and Police Outreach and Engagement Team (POET) officers attempted dialogue with MayDay USA security and counterdemonstrators to keep the groups separate.<sup>7</sup> Counterdemonstrators pushed closer to the rally venue as both groups grew. Officers used batons, bicycles, oleoresin capsicum spray (OC spray, or “pepper spray”), and PepperBall launchers against counterdemonstrators to maintain the fence line and make arrests.<sup>8</sup> SPD arrested 23 counterdemonstrators for property destruction, assault, and obstruction; most charges were eventually dropped.<sup>9</sup>

On June 7, 2025, OIG committed to a SER of SPD planning and response to the demonstrations. OIG worked with the Community Police Commission (CPC) to identify potential panelists and to seek a range of perspectives to ensure a comprehensive review of the Event.

## Incidents Considered

The Event spanned seven hours, culminating in 23 arrests and 16 reported uses of force by SPD. The panel reviewed four key aspects:

1. The process to grant a park use permit to a fundamentalist rally in a historically LGBTQ+ neighborhood and the short time frame for SPD to prepare for the Event, including early engagement efforts by POET.<sup>10</sup>
2. The attempted arrest of three counterdemonstrators for misdemeanor property destruction, and the 11 resulting arrests as SPD converged into the counterdemonstration zone in pursuit of the three individual subjects.
3. The use of bicycle fencing to create a counterdemonstration zone, as well as the escalation of conflict, arrests, and uses of force related to the positioning of barricade.
4. The continued crowd control protest posture of SPD after the conclusion of the Mayday USA rally. *(Note: The panel discussions were discontinued prior to review of this incident.)*

## Summary of Discussed Contributing Factors

Panelists identified 66 contributing factors, including factors related to:

- **City Procedures:** Coordination between SPD, Seattle Parks and Recreation, the Mayor’s Office, and the City Attorney’s Office limited SPD advance knowledge of the permitted rally and hindered SPD planning efforts.
- **Cultural Context:** The Capitol Hill neighborhood is a place of historical cultural significance, specifically Cal Anderson Park, for LGBTQ+ communities.<sup>11</sup> This context is particularly prominent during federal actions threatening transgender rights. The lack of acknowledgement or understanding of this context by SPD contributed to heightened tensions.

6 The MayDay USA rally and the gathering in response were considered demonstrations by SPD. For this report, OIG uses “counterdemonstrators” to refer to the group demonstrating against the MayDay USA rally.

7 POET was established in 2020 to improve SPD’s ability to engage with event organizers and participants. POET officers conduct outreach prior to crowd events to form relationships, encourage constructive dialogue, and ensure First Amendment protections.

8 [14.090 - Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control - Seattle Police Department \(WA\) - PowerDMS.](#)

9 [Judge orders release of 7 protesters after Cal Anderson Park rally arrests.](#)

10 The City of Seattle permitting process must follow applicable laws regarding the First Amendment.

11 This report contains multiple references to the queer and trans community and uses the term “LGBTQ+” for clarity and consistency. Other terminology may be utilized when referring to direct statements made by panelists or the anti-transgender ideology promoted by MayDay USA.

- **Anticipatory Defensiveness:** Outdated assumptions by SPD that “antifa”<sup>12</sup> and “black bloc”<sup>13</sup> are violent groups with intent to confront police, led SPD to misjudge the need for crowd control tactics, including uses of force.
- **Differentiation:** Assumptions about attendees’ motivations worsened communication, hampering POET and the Community Response Group (CRG) in appropriately identifying potential instigators of violence.<sup>14</sup>

See the [full report](#) for a complete list of discussed contributing factors.

## Summary of Discussed Recommendations

Panelists made 24 recommendations to SPD and the City, falling into these categories:

- **Community Legitimacy** – Addressing the lack of trust in SPD by various Seattle communities and equity impacts of SPD outreach and intelligence gathering processes.
- **Situational Awareness** – Acknowledging the need for SPD to shift their mindset by minimizing the belief that protesters work as a unified, oppositional group, rather than a diverse group of individuals with varying reasons for attending.
- **Communication** – Improving SPD’s ability to safely facilitate crowds by intentionally building trust with a set of diverse individuals and community organizations prior to planned events.
- **Tactics** – Improving SPD crowd management tactics by prioritizing dialogue policing and targeted enforcement tactics to safely facilitate First Amendment activity.

See the [full report](#) for a complete list of discussed contributing factors.

## Conclusion

OIG is grateful to the community and SPD panelists who engaged in good faith efforts to improve police protest response in Seattle and is regretful the process concluded prior to the development of consensus contributing factors and recommendations. The connections and understandings built during the panel sessions demonstrate the need for building partnerships between community, SPD, and OIG to encourage constitutional, equitable, and culturally relevant public safety.

OIG will continue to support SPD efforts to expand dialogue policing and improved demonstration response.<sup>15</sup>

12 See: [BBC - What is Antifa and why is Donald Trump targeting it?: Antifa: Definition, History, Tactics, and Legal Status - LegalClarity.](#)

13 “Black bloc” refers to a defensive collective action tactic used by demonstrators internationally since the 1980s. Demonstrators wear all black, often with face coverings, to show solidarity, prevent retaliation by employers or authorities for First Amendment activity, and protect against chemical munitions used offensively against them. For law enforcement, “black bloc” is widely considered an offensive tactic for coordinated protest actions (see: [Understanding the Black Bloc | Police Magazine](#)).

14 CRG was established in October 2020 to assist with 911, emergency response, and demonstration management. CRG acts as SPD’s primary demonstration management group.

15 SPD holds monthly LGBTQ Advisory Council outreach meetings run by community members. These meetings offer a venue for continued dialogue between community and SPD regarding the issues and concerns highlighted during the Event and in this report.