



**Seattle**  
Parks & Recreation

A photograph of two young children sitting on a blue playground structure. The child on the left is wearing a dark blue jacket and purple patterned pants. The child on the right is wearing a dark camouflage jacket and brown pants, and is waving. The background shows trees with autumn foliage. The image is overlaid with a colorful diagonal graphic consisting of purple, teal, green, and yellow bands.

# **2023 Annual Report**

#SeattleShines

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In 2023, Seattle Parks and Recreation provided access to 31 wading pools and sprayparks across the city.

## Dear Parks and Recreation Community,

I am so proud to share the 2023 Annual Report with you—our first to report comprehensively across all funds on Seattle Parks and Recreation’s accomplishments!

Seattle is blessed by its natural setting. We are surrounded by water and mountains, and sustained by the living remnants of great forests and green spaces. In this living and breathing ecosystem, parks are the lungs of the city.

Parks provide crucial gathering places for neighbors to come together, and serve as shining sources of strength, sustainability, and wellness for our community. Even on our gray and rainy days, our parks and recreation system continuously shines through to deliver places and spaces to get us into nature, to recreate, and to rejuvenate. And in a city of neighborhoods, small and large, parks are everywhere nearby in Seattle. We have a vital, almost sacred duty to preserve the natural legacy of the land: from the First Peoples, extending through the Olmsted design of our parks system at the turn of the 20th century, moving into the present day.

**As we think about our work we focus on three big areas: Healthy People, Thriving Environment and Vibrant Community.** Our parks and recreation system provides opportunities to stay healthy and improve well-being, connects Seattle’s residents and visitors to nature, and celebrates the vibrancy of our city. This work is getting recognized at national and international levels—the [Trust for Public Land](#) scored Seattle’s parks system one of the top 10 in the country, and the United Nations recognized Seattle as a [Role Model City](#) for our ecosystem restoration work.

2023 was a landmark year for Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR), the first of Cycle 2 of the Seattle Park District. Building on our baseline budget (made up of many different funding sources), our 2023 budget included significant new Park District resources to expand our programs and services. This report captures our efforts to use all these funds to serve our residents, including:

- Re-launching and expanding our Park Ranger program
- Keeping park restrooms clean and open longer
- Stepping up our efforts to restore natural areas and sustain the urban tree canopy
- Activating parks downtown and citywide with music, games, and events
- Providing resources to diverse community organizations to support free, culturally relevant health and fitness activities
- Working to decarbonize our facilities

I am honored to work with our staff to keep advancing this work, highlighting our successes, and encouraging others to believe in us. We will continue to sustain and enhance one of the country’s preeminent parks and recreation systems, helping to grow healthy people, a thriving environment, and vibrant community.

With appreciation and respect,



**AP Diaz**  
Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation

## Dear Seattle Residents,

As your Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners, our job is to represent the communities of Seattle as we provide oversight, consultation, and recommendations to Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) on its parks, programs, and facilities.

In 2022, we partnered with SPR staff and community to prioritize investments for the second six-year cycle of the Seattle Park District, a property tax earmarked specifically for parks and recreation services. Our vision for Cycle 2 was informed by significant public engagement and our own commitment to racial equity and excellence in SPR's operations. Additionally, we focused on SPR's core pillars of Healthy People, a Thriving Environment, and Vibrant Community, and insisted on strong community responsiveness and program effectiveness.

Now, we are closely monitoring how SPR is using those resources as one tool for public accountability and oversight. We have had front row seats to the major efforts undertaken in 2023 to ramp up to new levels of service, to prepare for new capital projects, and to better serve Seattle communities.

As you review SPR's 2023 Annual Report, **we want to emphasize our gratitude to the frontline employees of SPR**—lifeguards and recreation attendants, landscape architects and planners, custodians and gardeners, plumbers and arborists, staff leading programs for teens, older adults, and people with disabilities, and too many more to name—who gave their all in 2023 to steward the parks and recreation system that Seattle deserves.

This report and its data-heavy appendices are a deep dive into SPR's financial and operational performance in 2023, a high degree of transparency that we undertake in a spirit of accountability to residents and taxpayers.

We look forward to continuing our performance oversight role in the remaining years of Cycle 2.

Sincerely,

**Justin Umagat**  
**Marlon Herrera**

*2023 Co-Chairs of the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners*



# Welcome to Seattle Parks and Recreation's 2023 Annual Report!

## The Seattle Park District & Cycle 2

In 2014, Seattle voters approved a proposition that created the **Seattle Park District** and authorized collection of property taxes to expand parks and recreation services. The Park District is governed by the Seattle City Council acting as the Park District Board, with oversight from the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners (BPRC). Per its governing documents, the Park District plans its finances and activities in six-year cycles.

Since 2015, the Park District has funded park and facility maintenance and improvements, recreation programs, land acquisition, new park and facility development, and more.

After a multi-year public process, in 2022 the Seattle Park District Board adopted a new six-year financial plan (spanning 2023–2028) that significantly increased investments in many of Seattle's parks and recreation services. We call this new era "Cycle 2." These new Park District dollars were additive to a base budget made up of many other funding sources, and we set performance goals and service levels for Cycle 2 based on mobilizing all of these resources to steward our park and recreation system.

## Annual Reporting

Since its inception, providing annual reports on Park District-funded activities has been an important function for public awareness and accountability. Previous annual reports have focused specifically on Park District investments, representing an incomplete slice of total SPR funding and activities.

**Given the braided nature of our funding, for Cycle 2 reporting—beginning with this 2023 annual report—we will report comprehensively on our work across all our funding streams to provide a holistic view of our accomplishments.** [Detailed appendices](#) will continue to report financial specifics about Park District spending.

## Ramping Up to Cycle 2

**2023 was a year of ramping up our efforts to higher levels of service planned for Cycle 2—hiring staff, launching new projects, and expanding many existing programs.** Many of our programs also began to return to pre-pandemic service levels for the first time since early 2020. Throughout this report, you will see references to specific ramp-up activities, or **specific commitments made in Cycle 2** planning that we are building toward or have already met. You will also see SPR's commitment to equity in action, using data about equity zones to inform our ramp-up work.



**Cycle 2 Enhanced Services or Progress on Priorities**



**Seattle**  
**Parks & Recreation**



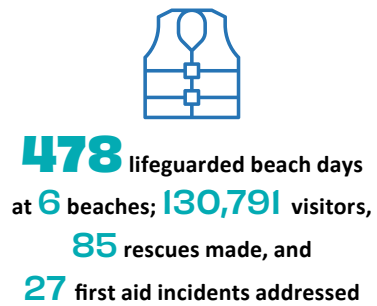


# Healthy People

Healthy people are active and practice healthy habits that prevent disease. But health isn't just a lack of sickness — it means positive, proactive physical, mental, and social well-being.

Our parks, facilities, and programs promote physical and mental wellness, provide opportunities to build healthy habits, and support social well-being.

**OUR EQUITY COMMITMENT:** Communities of color and low-income people disproportionately face poor health impacts, lack of access to physical activity, and less access to healthy, affordable food. We focus our efforts in ways that seek to reduce and ultimately eliminate racial health disparities.

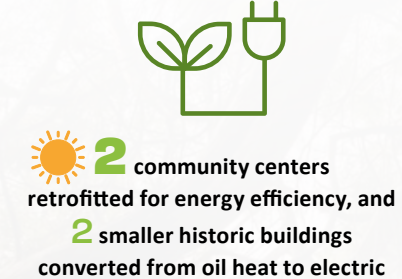


# Thriving Environment

A thriving environment is a healthy and resilient ecosystem that provides clean air and water, supports biodiversity, and creates accessible places for people to connect to nature.

We support a thriving environment through equitable park access, environmental education and community stewardship, ecosystem restoration and habitat protection, emissions reduction and energy conservation, water efficiency and green infrastructure, waste reduction and diversion, and climate resiliency.

**OUR EQUITY COMMITMENT:** Communities of color, low-income communities, and tribal populations are most at risk to the impacts of climate change and have been disproportionately exposed to environmental conditions that harm their health. We seek to minimize these impacts and use an environmental justice lens to prioritize the health and well-being of communities.





# Vibrant Community

In a vibrant Seattle, community members find opportunities for enrichment and skill building, forge social connections, and feel safe and welcomed in public spaces across the city.

Our parks and facilities provide indoor and outdoor spaces that enhance the vibrancy of our city, and combat social isolation by building community with people of all ages and identities. Our programs develop skills and provide employment experiences, promoting equity and inclusion.

**OUR EQUITY COMMITMENT:** Race-based disparities pervade our communities, in measures of household income, educational attainment, employment, and more. We will strengthen outreach and engagement opportunities, prioritize services that address these disparities in culturally and linguistically responsive ways, and design and develop our parks and facilities with equity in mind.



**198,983** scheduled hours on athletic fields



**10** fields kept unscheduled to allow for free drop-in play



**50,445** volunteer hours by **5,626** volunteers, valued at **\$1.6** million



**3,807** event permits, and **17,264** bookings



**2,137** program participants received a total of **\$1.62** million in scholarships to access childcare and recreation programs



**62,365** community center operating hours, up **8%** in 2023



**83%** of **1,914** instances of graffiti in parks resolved within **6** or fewer days; **658** repairs due to vandalism



**Transitioned** maintenance of Waterfront Park to Seattle Center, with a **21-person** maintenance and public safety team providing **24/7** presence



**21,677** hours of Park Concierge presence at **6** parks, and **5,630** events and activations coordinated by Seattle Parks and Recreation and partners in downtown parks



**14** Park Rangers deployed to **31** center city parks, issuing **776** verbal warnings, primarily related to off-leash dogs, use of alcohol or smoking, and camping in parks.

# Finances

The **Adopted Budget** is SPR's annual allocation of operating and capital resources, determined through the City's budget process and in alignment with the 6-year financial plan for the Seattle Park District. The **Revised Budget** reflects changes to the Adopted Budget including capital appropriation that carries forward automatically each year and any additional budget changes approved as part of supplemental budget amendments authorized by City Council. Almost all of the carry forward in the Revised Budget relates to SPR's Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

Cycle 2 of the Park District added significant resources to SPR's CIP, and much of 2023 was spent ramping up to support delivery of additional projects of all types with the majority of costs anticipated later in Cycle 2 when construction for major projects will occur.

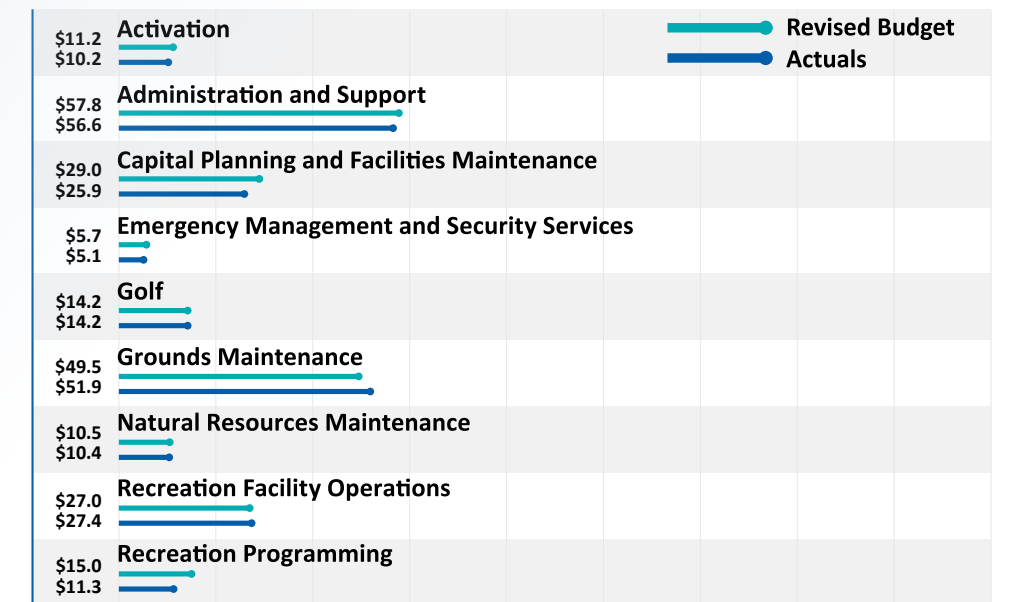
For [full financial and performance information](#) by detailed line of business, see Appendix A for the operating budget and Appendix B for the capital budget.

## 2023 Adopted Budget Overview

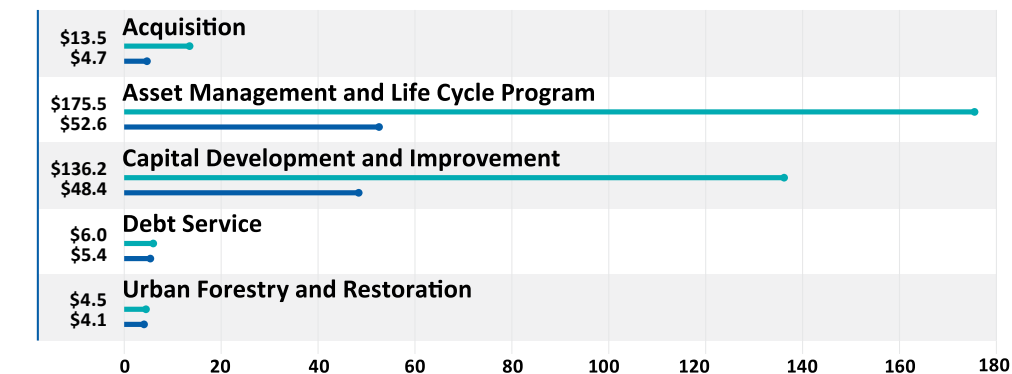
Funding Source	Operating	Capital	Total
Park District	\$63,838,644	\$48,475,483	\$112,314,127
General Fund	\$116,702,332	-	\$116,702,332
REET	-	\$24,402,047	\$24,402,047
Other Funds	\$38,934,530	\$36,588,426	\$75,522,956
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$219,475,506</b> <b>67%</b>	<b>\$109,465,956</b> <b>33%</b>	<b>\$328,941,462</b>

## 2023 Revised Budget to Actuals (in millions)

### Operating



### Capital



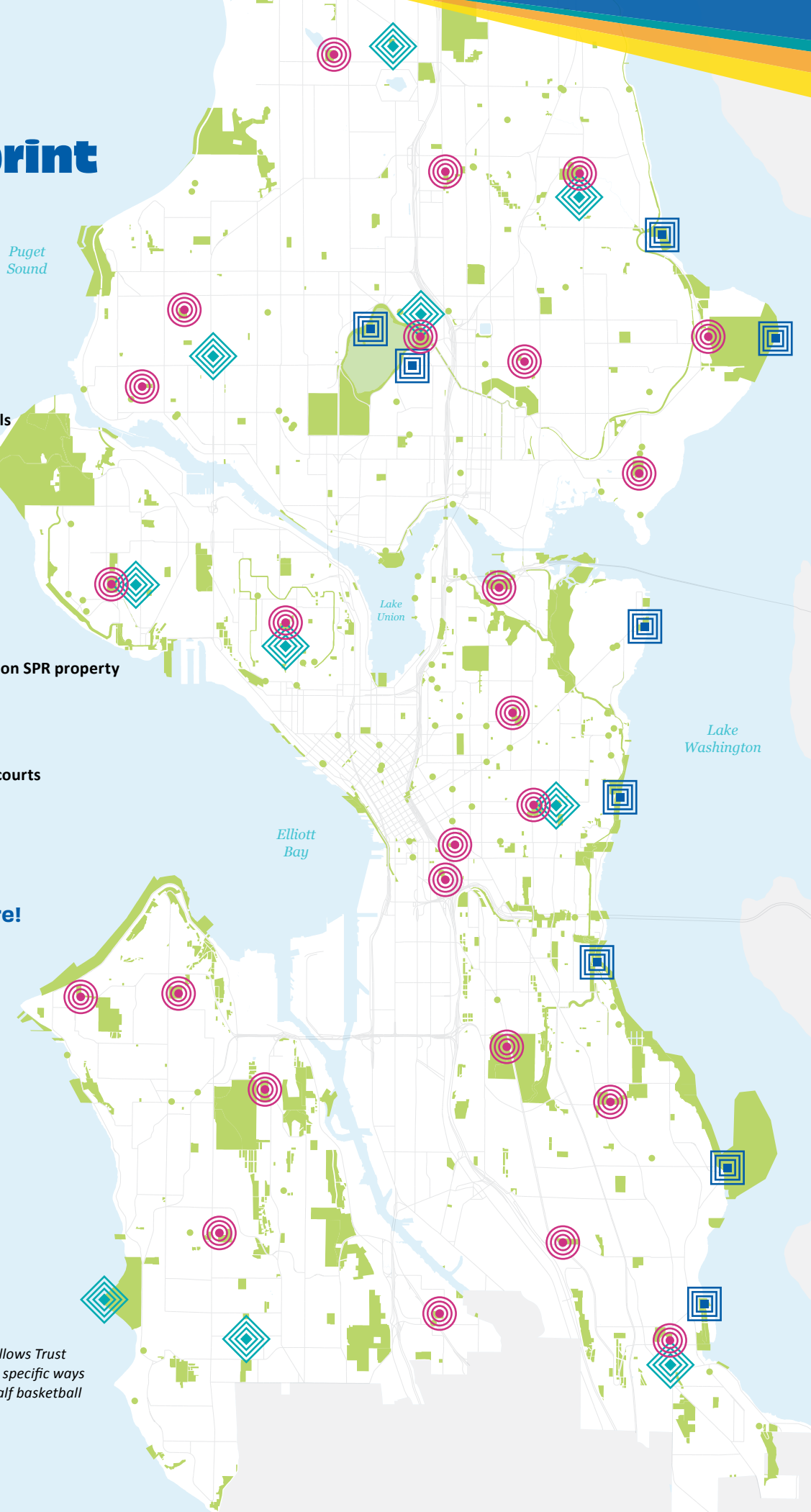
# Our Footprint in Seattle

- 2,584** acres of natural areas
- 152** children's play areas
- 140+** miles of soft-surface trails
- 140** racket sport courts
- 129** restrooms
- 115** ballfields
- 84** playfields
- 61.5** outdoor basketball courts
- 49.5** indoor basketball courts
- 32** P-Patch community gardens on SPR property
- 31** wading pools and sprayparks
- 17** fitness zones
- 17** dedicated outdoor volleyball courts
- 14** off leash dog areas
- 12** skateparks
- 4** golf courses
- ...and much, much more!**

-  Park
-  Community Center
-  Swimming Pool
-  Swimming Beach

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

*Note: This list of our assets generally follows Trust for Public Lands criteria, which includes specific ways to count various assets. For example, half basketball courts are counted as 0.5 courts.*





## Healthy People

Our parks, facilities, and programs promote physical and mental wellness, provide opportunities to build healthy habits, and support social well-being.

### Making parks and facilities accessible to all, faster!

As part of a citywide effort to make public facilities physically accessible and welcoming to people with disabilities, SPR strives to incorporate compliance with standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in every capital project. However, some upgrades are extensive and require additional funding. In addition, there is a backlog of accessibility barriers in parks and facilities not currently scheduled for major construction.

With Cycle 2 of the Park District, we now have dedicated annual funding to address barriers to accessibility, and we estimate that we can remove an average of 175 accessibility barriers annually. **We are happy to report that in 2023 we actually resolved 265 barriers!**

### Cycle 2 Enhanced Services

Increase the pace of removal of accessibility barriers.

Some examples include the Discovery Park Environmental Learning Center, where we removed barriers in restrooms and environmental education classrooms, and Rainier Community Center, where we added accessible pathways, ramps, and entrances to the community center and nearby playground.

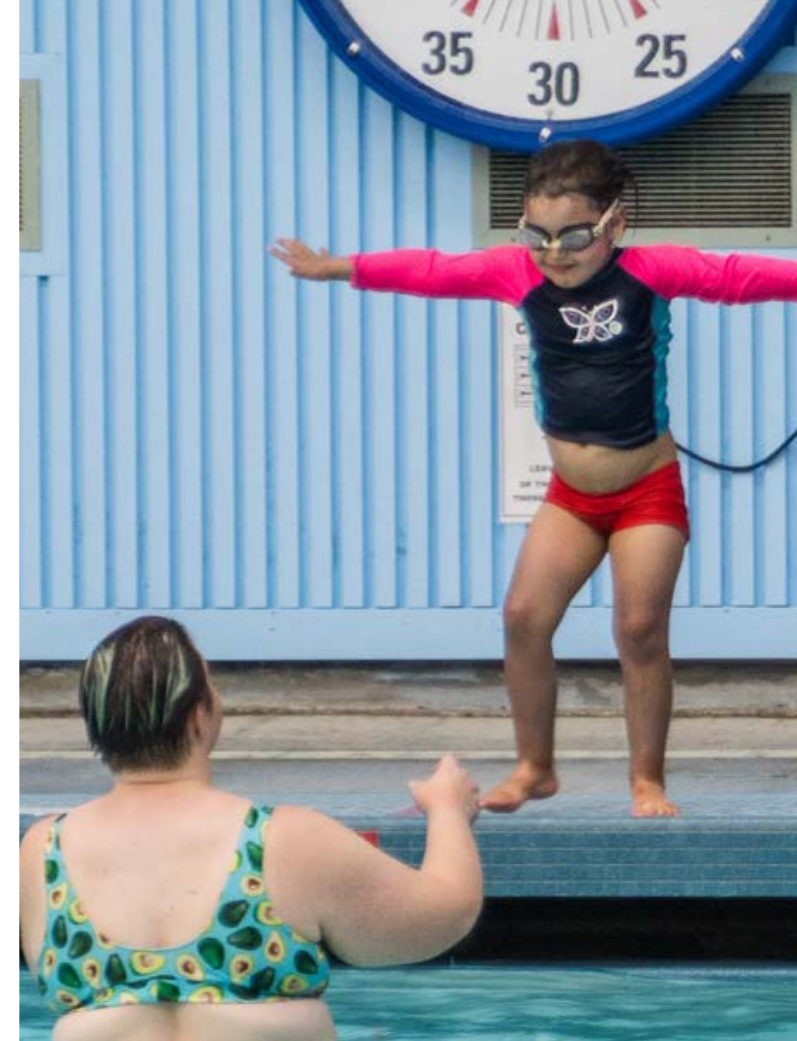
### Swim Seattle

Swimming “is a life skill, a basic human right that all individuals should possess, but particularly children,” says SPR’s Superintendent AP Diaz. “It’s particularly important in the city of Seattle. We are a city of water surrounded by lakes and the sea.” With that in mind, in 2023, SPR launched Swim Seattle in partnership with the YMCA, the Washington State Drowning Prevention Effort, No More Under Foundation, the Associated Recreation Council and other partners to increase access to swim lessons for those who need it most.

As SPR continues to ramp up Aquatic services to pre-pandemic levels, we aim to do so equitably – ensuring those most at risk of drowning have access to swim lessons. In support of Swim Seattle in 2023, SPR:

- Provided more than 350 free registered swim lessons and 3,000 free drop-in lessons to teens through our Late Night program and at lifeguarded beaches during the summer.
- Prioritized low-income young people for our swim lessons beginning in Spring 2023, allowing people eligible for SPR scholarships to register for lessons prior to the general public. We paired this with extensive outreach via email, on-site signage, and mailers to our scholarship-eligible families, as well as outreach events including foster families and community organizations.

As a result of these efforts, the proportion of scholarship-eligible youth in our swim lessons grew from 10% in Winter 2023 to 27% in Summer and Fall 2023.

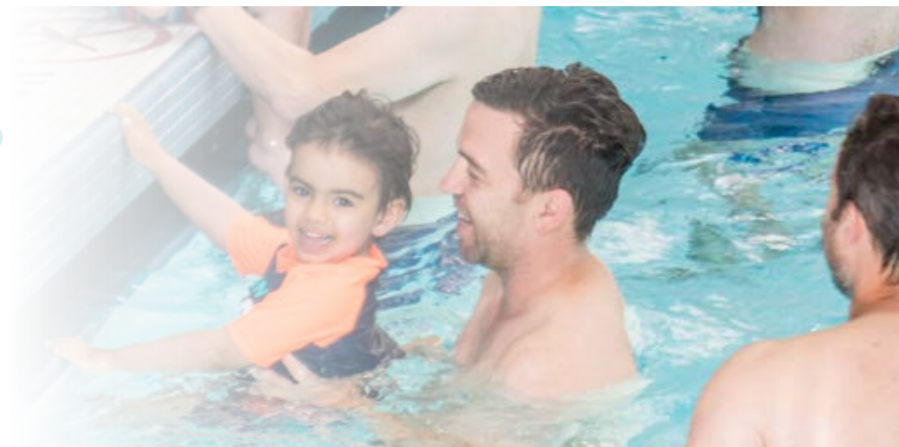


### Bringing back overnight camp for youth with disabilities

SPR’s Specialized Programs provides unique experiences for youth and adults with cognitive and physical disabilities. 2023 was a big year for this program—the first summer since the onset of the pandemic that we brought back overnight camps for youth.

For four weeks, youth with a variety of disabilities stayed overnight in Camp Long’s historic cabins four nights a week. The camp served more than 60 youth, with an average weekly attendance of 26. Each week of camp had a theme (think Fairy Tales and Superheroes), and art projects and games associated with that theme. SPR’s naturalists took campers on guided nature walks and adventure educators engaged campers in adaptive climbing rock walls and challenge course activities. Afternoons included all-camp activities such as kickball and tug of war—specially adapted to give campers with a variety of physical and cognitive disabilities the chance to participate at whatever level they wanted. Each night ended with special entertainment, always a camper favorite, which this summer included a variety of local artists, musicians and magicians, including the Seattle Sounders marching band.

Bringing this beloved program back after several years of hiatus took creative thinking to ensure quality experiences and safety for all participants. For this program, SPR also provides an on-site cook and 24-hour on-site nurses to make sure campers were well-fed, taking their medications, and staying healthy.





## Healthy People

### Resources for communities to get moving, access recreation, and experience the arts in parks

Data from the American Community Survey continues to show that communities of color and low-income people face disproportionately higher rates of health issues and lack of access to physical activity and recreation. Across many aspects of our programming, we seek to reduce these disparities through efforts like scholarships and free programs.

Since 2016, one important tool has been the work of grants and partnership programs like [Get Moving](#), [Recreation for All](#), and [Arts in Parks](#). Our staff provides grants and develops partnerships that connect diverse community members to recreation, physical activity, and the arts.

#### Get Moving and Rec for All

In 2023, \$436,000 in grants to 45 community-based organizations, small-scale entrepreneurs, and artists supported free, culturally relevant health, fitness, and recreation programming geared toward communities of color, immigrants and refugees, and low-income people. These programs took place in parks, community centers, and around the city in trusted community spaces and cultural centers, and in 2023 they served just over 5,000 participants. Activities included yoga for teens, water-colors for seniors, tai chi, Afrobeat fitness, cultural events, and community healing.

#### Organizations Funded in 2023\*:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Needs of the Community Society          | Inspired Child  |
| African Cultural Arts Center            | E&F Youth Sports                                      |
| Ase Theatre                             | Heart and Hustle Academy                              |
| Plus One Foundation                     | Spirit or Ire LLC                                     |
| Free Flo Fit                            | Maria Rico Dance Fitness                              |
| Seattle Adaptive Sports                 | Aaron Brooks Foundation                               |
| Summertime                              | <i>* includes only organizations, not individuals</i> |
| Wasat                                   |   |
| AMT Up 3D                               |   |
| Peace Peloton                           |   |
| CHAMP PROGRAM                           |   |
| Friends of the Rainier Beach Urban Farm |   |
| Marvin Thomas Memorial                  |   |
| Trill Drills and Skills LLC             |   |
| Brown Dove Wellness                     |   |
| Seattle Tennis & Education Foundation   |   |
| Inside Health Institute                 |   |
| Royalty Drill & Dance Ensemble          |   |
| Malawi Seattle Association              |   |

#### Arts in Parks

In 2023, we continued our partnership with the Office of Arts and Culture for the Arts in Parks program to facilitate granting of \$205,000 of Park District resources. Grants provided to 30 artists and arts organizations filled 28 parks with performances and interactive arts workshops. Since its inception, this program has prioritized parks in low-income and racially diverse neighborhoods, and that focus continued in 2023. Some examples include the ADEFUA Cultural Education Workshop in Columbia Park, where participants learned about African culture, history, and rhythms of dance movements with live drumming, and the Lake City Mini Park Concerts, where Aorta Artists brought organized live music back to the park for the first time since 2019. Learn more about the [Arts in Parks Program](#).

#### Arts in Parks in 2023:

- |                          |                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Albert Davis Park        | Olympic Sculpture Park      |
| Alki Beach Park          | Powell Barnett Park         |
| Ballard Commons Park     | Pratt Park                  |
| Be'er Sheva Park         | Pritchard Island            |
| Columbia Park            | Puget Park                  |
| Delridge Park            | Ravenna Park                |
| Dr. Blanche Lavizzo Park | Sandel Park                 |
| Duwamish Waterway        | Seattle PlayGarden          |
| Gas Works Park           | Volunteer Park Amphitheater |
| Genessee Park            |                             |
| Highland Park            |                             |
| Jefferson Park           |                             |
| John C. Little Park      |                             |
| Judkins Park             |                             |
| Lake City Mini Park      |                             |
| Licton Springs Park      |                             |
| Martha Washington Park   |                             |
| Myrtle Reservoir Park    |                             |
| Othello Park             |                             |

### Cycle 2 Progress on Priorities

Support additional community partners to provide free, culturally relevant health and fitness programs

### Progress on Keeping Park Restrooms Clean & Open

SPR maintains 129 restrooms in parks, either stand-alone facilities or attached to picnic shelters and similar structures. Prior to the infusion of new resources in Cycle 2, approximately half of these facilities closed during the cold months of the year due to two primary factors—SPR's maintenance budget and because cold temperatures are known to break pipes. Many of these restrooms are also decades old, with available resources allowing us to fully renovate or replace them only every 42 years compared to an industry standard of 30 years.

Park restrooms were also major sources of public feedback. In resident surveys we conducted in 2019 and 2021, restroom cleaning was the top concern mentioned by Seattleites regarding park maintenance. We heard this message loud and clear and included several big investments in Cycle 2 to improve the experience for park users. These include:

#### Expanding Daily & Non-Peak Season Restroom Cleaning

Beginning in March 2023, all open restrooms now get 2–3 cleanings per day year-round.

#### Shorten the Lifecycle Replacement of Park Restrooms

Cycle 2 resources support much needed major refreshes of park restrooms including replacing windows, finishings, plumbing fixtures, partitions, and roofs, meeting accessibility requirements, and providing non-gender specific restroom options. By the end of 2023, we had 6 restroom renovations in construction. With sustained funding, we aim to complete a total of 27 restroom renovation projects by 2028.

#### Sites in Construction in 2023:

- |                       |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Bradner Gardens       | Green Lake Park  |
| Bitter Lake Playfield | Interbay Stadium |
| Gas Works Park        | Pathways Park    |

In addition to these on-the-ground changes, we created a new tool for public information related to park restroom access. A [new online dashboard](#), updated weekly, lets people know which restrooms are open, which are closed, and why (seasonal closure, repair, or vandalism).

*\* Note that in extreme cold pipes may still be vulnerable, so temporary closures may be necessary due to forecasted weather conditions.*

### Cycle 2 Enhanced Services

Prepare around 10 restrooms annually for year-round use. Add new teams for restroom cleaning. Renovate 4–5 aging restrooms annually.

#### Increase Access to Restrooms

Increase year-round access to restrooms by weatherizing to prevent frozen pipes. In 2023, 10 restrooms were weatherized allowing them to stay open year-round, and we intend to weatherize the remaining 50 restrooms that close seasonally by the end of Cycle 2.\*

#### Sites Winterized in 2023:

- |                       |                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| David Rogers Park     | Lincoln Park (Colman Pool) |
| Magnolia Park         | Westcrest Park             |
| Magnuson Sports Field | Othello Playground         |
| Lakewood Playground   | Delridge Community Center  |
| EC Hughes Playground  | Madrona Park               |







# Thriving Environment

We support a thriving environment through equitable park access, environmental education and community stewardship, ecosystem restoration and habitat protection, emissions reduction and energy conservation, water efficiency and green infrastructure, waste reduction and diversion, and climate resiliency.



## Seattle recognized as a leader of #GenerationRestoration

In 2023, Seattle and SPR were recognized at the state and federal level, as well as internationally, for our work to restore our urban ecosystems. At the state level, SPR became part of the Washington Tree Equity Collaborative, and at the federal level, we along with several local partners were awarded a \$12.9 million federal grant to promote ecosystem restoration.

On World Cities Day in October 2023, the City of Seattle was recognized as a Role Model City by the United Nations for our work on urban ecosystem restoration. SPR Superintendent AP Diaz said at the time, “Our residents value healthy and thriving ecosystems and have dedicated decades of time and resources to ensure biodiversity thrives in our community, which is why I’m extremely proud these efforts are now being recognized internationally.” Read more about SPR’s work to restore the urban canopy below

## Balancing the needs of people & wildlife in parks

Ospreys are Seattle’s original sea hawks, one among many species of wildlife that are present and persistent in our urban environment. These majestic birds migrate to Seattle in the spring to hunt for fish in the Puget Sound and Lake Washington, often making their nests in parks near the water. In 2023, an osprey nest was noticed on top of a light pole at Dahl Playfield, impeding our ability to light the field for games. Rather than just remove the nest, SPR staff built a nesting platform above the light pole while the ospreys were away and put the nest material on top—prompting a pair of ospreys to return and raise chicks there!

This is one of many efforts SPR staff make daily to balance the needs of people and wildlife in parks. From managing for the needs of salmon and beavers at Carkeek Park, to coordinating mowing and weeding to avoid harming ground-nesting birds, we take our responsibility to wildlife seriously.

## Quick wins on reducing energy use and emissions from our buildings

The City of Seattle aims to be a leader in the fight against climate change by decarbonizing our facilities and operations and transitioning our buildings to fully electric systems. In preparation for major decarbonization projects in future years of Cycle 2 (see more on this work in the [Building for the Future](#) section) we are working to reduce electric demand in existing systems. In addition, in 2023 we made progress by reducing greenhouse gas emissions at several facilities.

At Rainier and Miller community centers, we took care of energy efficiency “low-hanging fruit” prior to the heavier lift of wholesale decarbonization—ensuring the buildings will use less energy overall and are ready for the transition to carbon-free energy in future years. At both sites, indoor and outdoor lights were switched to LED, lighting controls were upgraded, and domestic hot water was switched from a gas-fired system to new heat pump technology. Destratification fans were also installed in the gyms—improving overall building performance and occupancy comfort.

A small number of SPR’s buildings still use carbon-intensive legacy systems like oil heating. In 2023, we transitioned a Victory Heights building (currently the site of a childcare) and the Woodland Park Lawn Bowling clubhouse from oil heat to efficient electric heat pumps, removed the underground storage tanks, and tested soil to confirm there was no remaining pollution. This work reduced greenhouse gas emissions while adding cooling over the summer—a win-win for community and the environment.

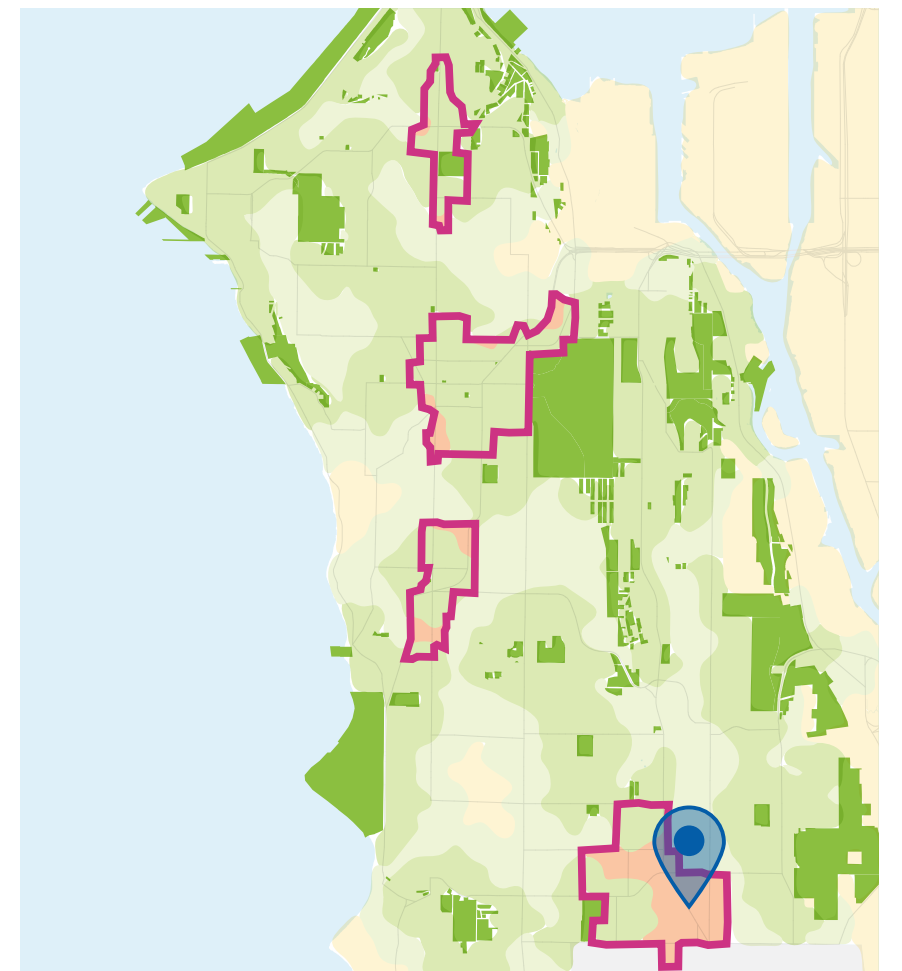
 **Cycle 2 Progress on Priorities**  
Prepare 2 community centers for electrification annually.

## Closing gaps in park access

Access to the fresh air and open space support environmental justice and public health. SPR has a goal that everyone living in an urban village is within a five-minute walk to a park, and those outside urban villages are within a 10-minute walk to a park. The Trust for Public Land, with its [2023 ParkScore report](#), found that 99% of Seattle residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park—compared to the 73% in the average large American city. However, there are still some remaining gaps, especially in the five-minute walk goal for urban villages.

In September 2023, SPR acquired property for a future park site in the Westwood-Highland Park Residential Urban Village, a diverse neighborhood in southwest Seattle. This land was selected for purchase both because it filled a significant hole in our official gap analysis, but also because of significant community interest in turning it into a park. While the property is approximately one third of an acre, as part of the City’s One Seattle efforts, it has the potential to grow to almost an acre if combined with adjacent street right of way in partnership with Seattle Department of Transportation—creating a generously sized park to serve a growing population for years to come.

SPR has limited budget for land acquisition, but has a long history of leveraging funds to meet our walking distance goals and support efforts to expand our greenspaces. In fact, between 2018 and 2023 SPR leveraged more than \$8 million in external funds to support land acquisition, with most coming from the [King County Conservation Futures Fund](#), as well as some important private donations supporting the expansion our park system.



**2023 SPR Gap Analysis**

- Urban Villages
- Service Gaps (inside Urban Villages)
- Service Gaps (outside Urban Villages)
- SPR Park Boundaries
- 5-minute walk (1/4 mile)
- 10-minute walk (1/2 mile)



### Sustaining the urban canopy — in natural areas and developed parks

Seattle is famously the Emerald City, and rightly proud of our trees. However, a 2021 citywide Tree Canopy Assessment found that Seattle needed to be doing more to sustain and enhance our urban forest. SPR took these findings seriously, and in 2023 made major investments in the ability of our tree crew to plant and care for more trees.

Prior to Cycle 2, given the age of our tree canopy, pruning hazard trees was a major focus of work, limiting how many new trees could be planted and cared for. With a renewed emphasis on planting and caring for trees to sustain our urban tree canopy, Cycle 2 resources added personnel and funding to plant new trees and care for them—setting a goal of adding 1,800 new (and relatively large) trees to developed parks by 2028. We’re happy to report that in 2023, we planted 199! (Of note, this effort in developed parks was a critical addition to our longstanding commitment to planting and caring for trees in natural areas as part of the [Green Seattle Partnership](#), where we plant thousands of small trees annually.)

Where best to plant these trees? Trees are a valuable tool in keeping cool in a warming climate—as research conducted in Seattle’s own parks demonstrates. As part of these new investments, SPR created a new program focused on adding trees to developed parks, with 80% of them going to what we call “equity heat zones,” areas with fewer trees and higher temperatures in lower-income and more diverse parts of the city.

But it isn’t enough to just plant trees and wish them the best—we need to nurture them until they are strong enough to stand on their own. Using new Cycle 2 resources, we have extended the tree establishment period from three years to five, to mitigate the impacts of a hotter climate. This means that for five years after planting, we commit to mulching and weeding to give the tree the space to grow, and watering during the hot and dry months. From May through September, SPR crews and contractors work hard to water thousands of young trees approximately weekly, sometimes using existing on-site irrigation, other times getting creative by filling a water tank on a truck and delivering it by hose to thirsty young trees. We also make creative use of on-site resources when possible, gathering leaves to use on-site as much around new trees to prevent erosion, rather than trucking it away.

In 2023, our natural resources professionals also built out the technology infrastructure needed to track the five-year establishment period, with a geographic database noting the year a tree was planted, when it was watered and mulched, when it was pruned or removed—making for better management in future years.

### Cycle 2 Enhanced Services

Expand the capacity of SPR’s urban forestry teams to respond to climate change through tree planting and extending the tree care establishment period, including dedicated resources focused on planting trees in developed parks.

### Investing in Seattle’s trails

Our parks and natural areas contain forests, creeks, and meadows. Residents access these urban wildlands through our network of more than 140 miles of soft-surface trails. Maintaining these trails and keeping them in safe and usable condition is the job of SPR’s trail crew and volunteers, and thanks to new resources from Cycle 2, we expanded our trails crew in 2023 for the first time in more than 20 years—growing from 2 staff to 6.

The newly enhanced crew began by addressing some of the trails that had waited the longest for maintenance. From there, they turned their attention to the trail system citywide, making sure to mix up general maintenance, trail mapping, and more complex projects each week to keep the work interesting.

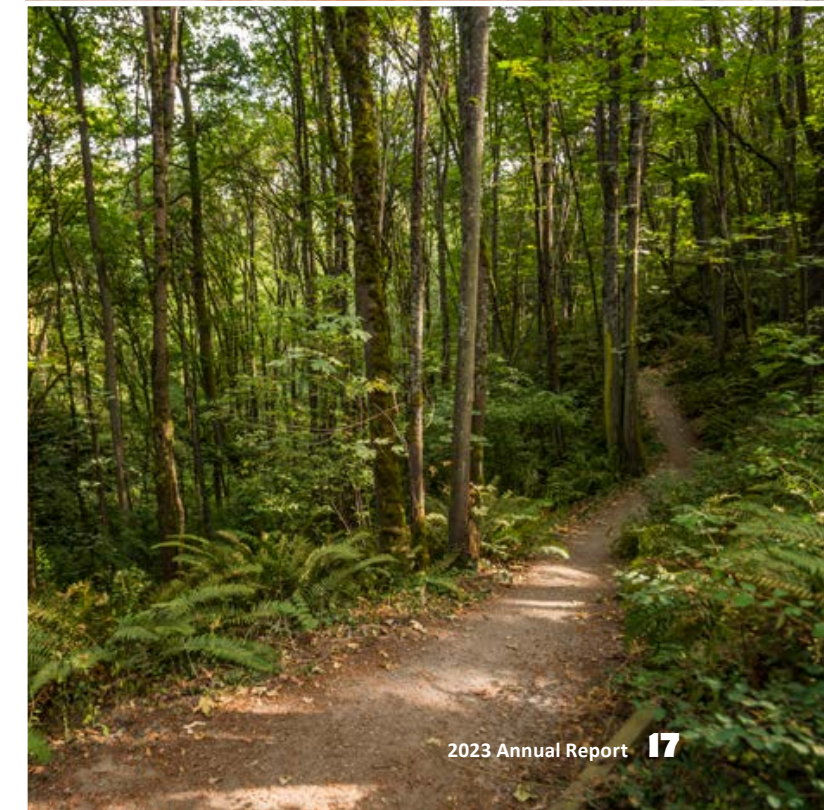
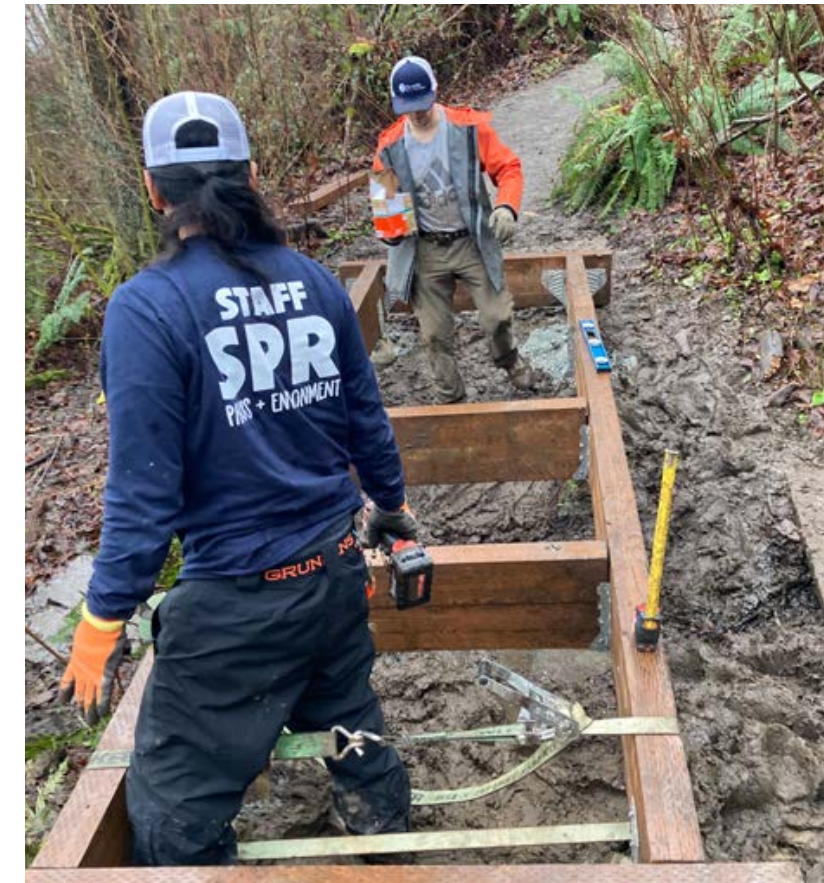
Early one morning in October 2023, Amir Williams, the Trails Coordinator, gathered the crew together to discuss their next job: restoring the North Beach Trail at Discovery Park. They reviewed a map, considered the finer details of the work ahead of them, gathered their tools, and loaded into their trucks. This project was particularly complicated, because it included replacing a 22-foot long bridge (designed by SPR engineer Eduardo Aban) and building 14 steps on either side. The materials for this work (hundreds of pounds of gravel, metal treads, and dozens of pieces of lumber more than 20 feet long) had to be carried by hand from the nearest parking lot—more than a mile away due to the North Beach Trail’s remote location.

In addition to trail maintenance, the crew also works to renovate trailheads, making them more obvious, visible, and welcoming. Improving trailheads at Roxhill Park, home to one of Seattle’s last remaining bogs that plays an important role in the Longfellow Creek watershed, was another 2023 milestone project making the site better for community visits and environmental education.

Through these and many other projects, the newly expanded trails crew maintained 10 miles of trails in 2023—compared to 6 miles in 2022 prior to the new Cycle 2 resources. In addition, they completed 25 trailhead renovations, mapped 5.5 miles of trail, and engaged volunteers including Boy Scouts and REI employees in 1,523 hours of work to maintain an additional 2 miles of trails.

### Cycle 2 Enhanced Services

Expand the dedicated Trails Crew to maintain and preserve our trail systems, providing access, connectivity, and safety for the public.





## Vibrant Community

Our parks and facilities provide indoor and outdoor spaces that enhance the vibrancy of our city, and combat social isolation by building community with people of all ages and identities. Our programs develop skills and provide employment experiences, promoting equity and inclusion.

### Opening doors to recreation on more evenings and weekends

Community centers are critical spaces for residents to gather, recreate, and combat social isolation. In 2023, we were able to restore community centers to pre-pandemic operating hours. In addition, thanks to additional funding from Cycle 2 of the Park District, we increased operating hours at eight community centers across the city, giving residents more access in the evenings and weekends. While all these eight facilities listed below benefited from this investment, it was most transformative at Delridge Community Center (a 50% increase in weekly operating hours to allow for evening and weekend recreation) and Laurelhurst Community Center (reopening as a full-service community center for the first time since a 2022 budget change).

#### Weekly Operating Hours

Community Center	2023	2024
Bitter Lake	68	81
Delridge	43	66
Laurelhurst	0	25
Rainier Beach	73	81
Van Asselt	45	49
Yesler	57	66

### Cycle 2 Enhanced Services

Increase community center operating hours by 8% to at least 60,000 annually.



### Quicker response to graffiti and vandalism

Parks and facilities see a lot of wear and tear from community use and vandalism. SPR's in-house skilled crafts crews (think plumbers, electricians, painters, and carpenters) work hard to maintain and repair assets to keep them safe, clean, and operational. Responding to graffiti and vandalism, in partnership with other City departments, has always been a part of this work, but we have not always had the resources to respond quickly—especially as Seattle saw a 52% growth in graffiti reported by the public or discovered by staff during the pandemic. In 2023, with new resources from Cycle 2 of the Park District, we hired five additional staff whose role is to respond quickly to vandalism and graffiti in SPR parks and facilities. In 2023, this included 658 repairs associated with vandalism in our parks or facilities, such as broken windows, arson in restrooms, theft of copper wiring in athletic field lights, and more. SPR also responded to 1,615 instances of graffiti in our parks or facilities, with 83% cases resolved within six days or fewer, and 95% resolved within two weeks.

### Cycle 2 Enhanced Services

Establish a response team within SPR for key repairs and maintenance in response to vandalism and graffiti.

In 2023, SPR and the Office of Arts and Culture (through their HopeCorps program) partnered to add murals to park restrooms across the city—both to add some visual beauty and to deter graffiti. Research suggests that murals are an effective means of changing behavior regarding unsanctioned graffiti, and also provide paid work opportunities for local artists. In 2023, we worked with a local artist to paint a mural at Sandel Park in Greenwood, and we sought out 17 additional artists and selected 17 additional sites for murals to be painted in 2024—with a special focus on parks in neighborhoods with high scores on [Seattle's Racial and Social Equity Index](#).

### Park Rangers support safe and welcoming parks

Park Rangers work to enhance the safety and quality of life in Seattle's parks through a uniformed presence, respectful and professional assistance, and customer service to all park users and visitors.

As they shaped Cycle 2 investments, Mayor Harrell and the Park District Board shared a major interest in ensuring parks are safe and welcoming to all. One significant investment toward this goal was to reinvigorate SPR's Park Ranger program—providing resources to grow the program from 2 Rangers to 28!

As 2023 began, SPR jumped into hiring a first cohort of 14 Rangers and then held a six-week in-house Park Ranger Academy, preparing Rangers to provide excellent customer service, enforce the Park Code, and interact with tourists, residents, and people in crisis on a daily basis. Deployed downtown\*, Rangers worked in 31 parks in 2023.

As part of their enforcement of the Park Code, Rangers first seek voluntary compliance through friendly conversation and providing information. If that does not address problematic behaviors, Park Rangers may elevate to a verbal warning—issuing 776 verbal warnings in 2023, primarily for smoking, drinking alcohol, having dogs off-leash, or camping in parks.

### Cycle 2 Enhanced Services

Reestablish the Park Ranger program to enhance safety and promote voluntary compliance of park rules.

\* Until December 2023, Rangers have always operated under a geographic restriction (based on the City's negotiations with the Seattle Police Officers Guild, or SPOG), only authorized to work in center city parks.



### Standing up operations at Waterfront Park in partnership with Seattle Center

In January 2023, the City Council delegated most aspects of waterfront operations to Seattle Center, recognizing their expertise in managing a vibrant civic campus. This also included allocating approximately \$3.2 million in Park District funds in 2023 to deliver on the City's commitments to a high-quality park user experience and maintenance of the park. Using these resources, Seattle Center hired a 15-person public safety team and six-person maintenance team in time for the July 2023 transition. Seattle Center's work is supported by partners including SPR and the Friends of Waterfront Seattle, who entered into a management agreement in 2023 to formalize this partnership.

In addition to daily maintenance, Seattle Center's dedicated team addressed more than 130 work orders from July-December 2023, mostly involving graffiti and waste management in the park. The public safety team had a significant positive impact with over 1,200 public interactions and a 24/7 presence in the park which helped to address challenging behaviors and to provide those in need with resources and support.



Residents enjoy an outdoor movie in Freeway Park, one of more than 5,000 activations by SPR or partners in center city parks in 2023.

### Activating the Center City

Downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods are the heart of Seattle, and SPR plays a major role in activating downtown parks to support Seattle’s vibrancy. 2023 was a major year for our center city activation efforts—SPR reopened City Hall Park, invested in the Park Concierge program, and partnered with other groups to activate additional parks.

### City Hall Park Restored and Reopened

On June 13, 2023, Mayor Harrell joined civic leaders, business owners, and community members to celebrate the reopening of City Hall Park after a years-long closure due to an encampment—with significant work to restore the grounds and preparation of enhanced activation in collaboration with King County, and many community organizations. Ongoing activation at the park includes the presence of our park concierges, art installations, visits by Park Rangers, and buskers playing music of all genres.

#### Cycle 2 Enhanced Services

Expand positive activation services and staff presence through Park Concierge program to deter negative activities in the downtown core.

### Investing in the Park Concierge Program

A key facet of downtown park activation is the Park Concierge Program—a partnership between SPR and the Associated Recreation Council to staff several center city parks. In 2023, concierges had a presence in six center city parks: Cal Anderson Park, City Hall Park, Denny Park, Freeway Park, Hing Hay Pay, and Pioneer Park. Concierges activate parks through setting up tables, chairs, and outdoor games, and by supporting events. They also serve as a friendly face in the park, providing information, and tracking and reporting maintenance issues, doing their part to keep the space clean and welcoming.

At times, concierges come face-to-face with the crisis of unsheltered homelessness and drug addiction impacting our downtown. They leverage the relationships they build through daily interactions to assist getting people into detox facilities and provide information on available shelters and social services. They track and report waste from drug use such as needles and have even intervened in the case of drug overdoses or other medical issues; in 2023, they administered Narcan nine times and performed CPR five times.

Funding from Cycle 2 also supported Associated Recreation Council workforce equity and employee retention efforts for these key staff members, ensuring expansion of our activation program is sustainable.

#### Cycle 2 Enhanced Services

Provide resources to partners to activate 2 additional parks (Bell Street and Pioneer Park).

### Renewing and Expanding Partnerships for Activation

In 2023, we also renewed our partner agreements with InterIm Community Development Association, the Freeway Park Association, and the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA), who all support safe and vibrant center city parks through activation efforts. Additional funding from Cycle 2 allowed us to expand the partnership with DSA to activate two additional spaces: Bell Street and Pioneer Park.



# Building For The Future

SPR completed 45 capital projects in 2023—from renovating 7 play areas to replacing synthetic turf on 5 athletic fields and many more. The map displays many major capital project completions in 2023.

In the first year of Cycle 2, SPR initiated planning work on many Cycle 2 capital priorities. A capital project generally takes 2-3 years to complete, and includes stages of planning and design long before projects are “shovel ready” (see [Appendix B](#) for more details). Depending on the scale of the project, it may also include significant community engagement. Given this, many Cycle 2 capital priorities won’t enter construction until later years in the cycle. However, thanks to dedicated staff work in 2023, and building off our prior year efforts, we’ve already got some progress to report.

## Parks CommUNITY Fund



With Cycle 2, SPR transformed the Major Projects Challenge Fund into the Parks CommUNITY Fund to advance park equity through a community-led process.

The Fund will invest in large and small capital projects using participatory budgeting and equitable grant-making practices, with goals of expanding inclusive access to clean and safe parks, closing gaps in access to quality parks and facilities, and centering efforts in partnership with communities affected by racism and other forms of oppression. In 2023, we finalized the program approach, and in 2024 we will launch the first phase of idea collection.

Get engaged at the project page: [seattle.gov/parks/about-us/projects/park-community-fund](https://seattle.gov/parks/about-us/projects/park-community-fund).

## Off-Leash Area Expansion Study

First piloted in 1997, SPR now maintains off-leash areas (OLAs) for dogs at 14 parks—but many residents consistently request more places to let dogs run free. SPR has three new OLAs in the works, at the South Park Community Center campus, at the Georgetown Flume site, and in Smith Cove Park. In addition, Cycle 2 included funding to plan and design three additional new OLAs and funding to build two, so in 2023 SPR completed the OLA Expansion Study to identify the best possible locations. We reviewed 32 parks as possible sites for future OLAs (using criteria including safety, environmental sensitivity, geographic gaps between existing OLAs, and ADA access) and performed community engagement (including in-person outreach throughout the city, and an online survey garnering 4,700+ responses). In 2024, the plan will narrow down to several recommended sites and take this recommendation to the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners for review.

## Decarbonizing our facilities

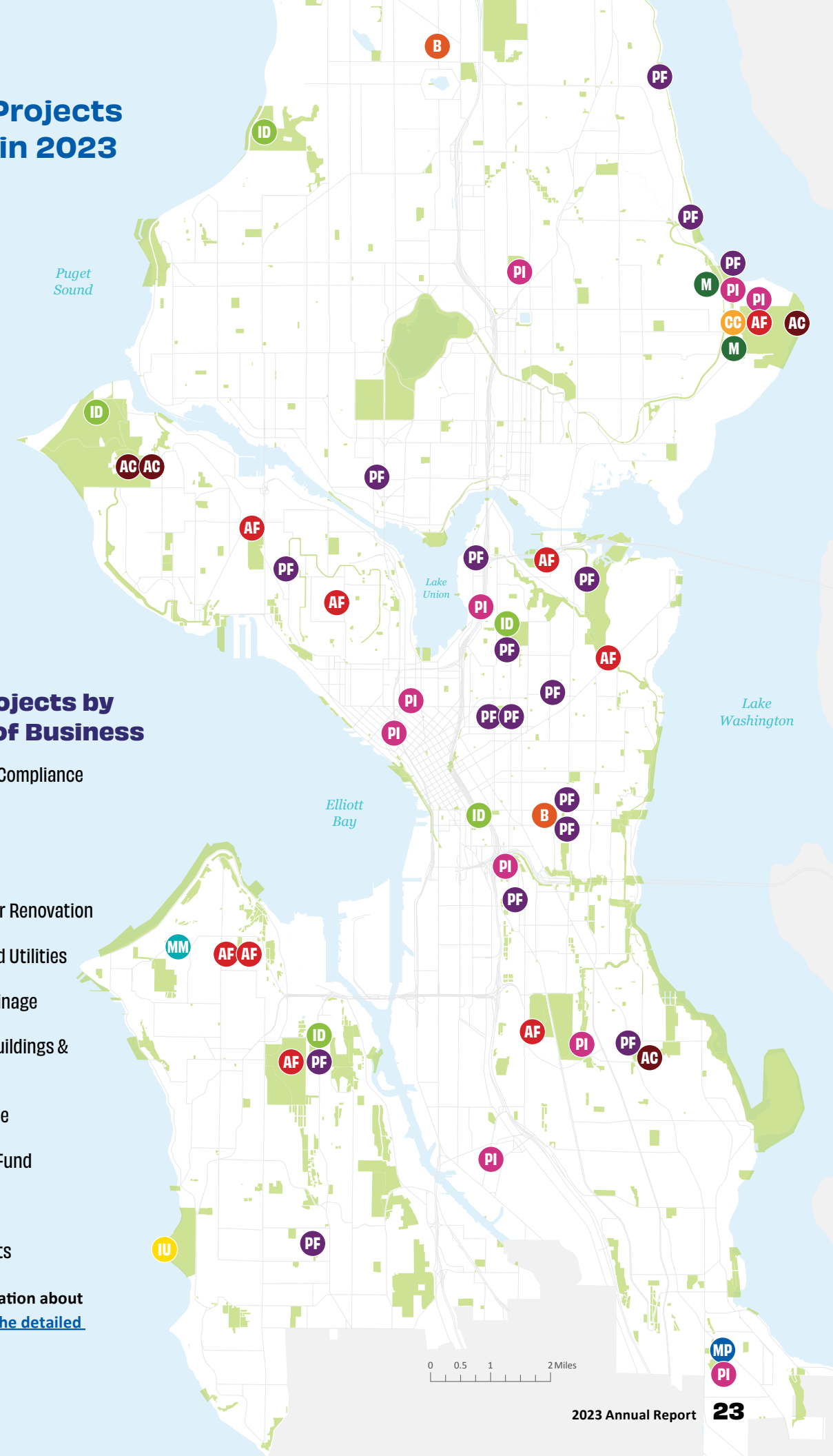
Cycle 2 provided resources to swap out carbon-intensive systems with cleaner energy sources as part of the City’s overall goal of decarbonizing our fleets and facilities. In addition to the work to reduce electrical use in several facilities, we partially decarbonized Magnuson Community Center. 2023 was also the year we kicked off planning for the major work needed to decarbonize our buildings. We engaged a consultant to conduct feasibility studies for electrification of several facilities (Garfield, High Point, Jefferson, Rainier, and Van Asselt community centers, as well as the Genessee crew quarters building, to support charging of electric vehicles and electric leaf blowers). We also initiated planning for six solar arrays to be built over the course of Cycle 2, and are working with a consultant to identify feasible sites. Finally, we are seeking to leverage the City’s investment in decarbonization with state and federal resources.

# 45 Capital Projects Completed in 2023

## Completed Projects by Detailed Line of Business

- AC** Accessibility and Compliance
- AF** Athletic Fields
- B** Buildings
- CC** Community Center Renovation
- IU** Infrastructure and Utilities
- ID** Irrigation and Drainage
- M** Magnuson Park Buildings & Infrastructure
- MM** Major Maintenance
- MP** Cycle I Challenge Fund
- PF** Park Features
- PI** Park Improvements

For more specific information about individual projects, [see the detailed appendix](#).



## That's our report on 2023! Here are ways we're hearing from you.

This report has shared much of our department's work in 2023. **But the success of Cycle 2 depends on authentic, two-way communication with you!** While we did [extensive community engagement](#) as part of action planning in the lead up to the development of Cycle 2, we also want to hear from you as we implement those plans. SPR maintains a variety of open channels to hear from our communities regularly.

## Feedback and community engagement

Join us in shaping the future of Seattle's parks and recreation by sharing your thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Your feedback and engagement are crucial in helping us improve our programs and services for the community. We encourage everyone to get up-to-date information on our [website](#) and [blog](#), or by signing up for our [e-newsletter](#). Please follow and engage with us online through our [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), and [LinkedIn](#) pages, and share any parks and recreation-related questions, concerns, or feedback by emailing [PKS\\_Info@seattle.gov](mailto:PKS_Info@seattle.gov). Community members can also report park maintenance issues to the City of Seattle through the [Find It, Fix It](#) app.

As one of Seattle's largest public-facing departments, our staff interact with the public, program participants, and community partners daily. Through these interactions and relationships, staff collect a variety of valuable feedback about our programs and services that help guide decision making. SPR also provides many opportunities to engage with us more formally, including through our Community Engagement Ambassadors (who are focused on outreach to underrepresented residents of Seattle), as well as through organized listening sessions, community engagement open houses, online and telephone surveys, or community meetings focused on specific projects, facilities, or programs. We receive information from the City's online Find It, Fix It app that informs our maintenance priorities and hear from residents daily via email and our various social media platforms. We also welcome public comments at our Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners meetings. Translation and interpretation services may be made available at these engagement opportunities with advance notice.

## Park Inspection Program

SPR's Park Inspection Program seeks to get detailed feedback from a user's vantage point on how well we are meeting our standards for maintenance and safety.

In 2023, trained community volunteers performed inspections of 39 randomly selected parks throughout the city, taking a careful eye to park features and rating various aspects of our maintenance on a scale from 1 to 5, and provide feedback on park conditions. In 2023, 79% of our maintenance standards were being fully achieved at these parks (compared to our goal of at least 85%).

In addition, SPR has begun a park inspection survey program, with signage asking park visitors to scan a QR code and provide feedback on the park. In 2023, these surveys were out in 67 parks receiving feedback from 1,259 respondents.



## Acknowledgements

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Cycle 2 investments were informed by significant community engagement.



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[seattle.gov/parks](http://seattle.gov/parks)



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