



Strategic Plan Implementation | Summary of Feedback Received to Date

Biweekly summaries of feedback received through our engagement activities. The first two summaries included below cover activities from August 16 – September 12. This was distributed via SPR's Strategic Plan newsletter. To receive future updates, [sign up for this newsletter](#).



Seattle
Parks & Recreation

Strategic Plan Implementation Update

In mid-August, Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) launched community engagement to support implementation planning for our [2020-2032 Strategic Plan](#). This newsletter will report out on where we've been and high-level takeaways of what we're hearing through this work every two weeks, with this edition focused on engagement activities and feedback received between August 16 – August 29. We are also posting all the raw data we receive through our various engagement activities on our [Strategic Plan website](#) so our community can take a deeper dive into the detailed feedback we are receiving and processing.

Strategic Plan Background

SPR's Strategic Plan lays out priorities and direction for the department over a 13-year period. SPR paused implementation planning when we pivoted to emergency pandemic response in early 2020. Over the past 18 months, Seattle has experienced dramatic change – a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, racial reckoning, economic downturn, and increasing impacts of climate change.

Many of SPR's core services bring people together to share space and build community. To support the community in response to the crises of 2020 and help shape our short-term budget priorities and operations, we are seeking to engage with communities we serve about how their needs have shifted since the pandemic. We need to better understand how community needs and priorities have changed, particularly for those disproportionately impacted by these crises.

August 16-29, 2021



{Image Description: The top bar of the welcome page of the Seattle Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan Implementation online open house website, which includes a photo of a woman walking, youth playing basketball outdoors, a young girl holding up an art project, a Zumba class, forest restoration efforts, and a kayaker on a lake. It also shows the dates of the Online Open House from August 27 – October 13 and shows the navigation menu of the page.}

Online Open House

On Friday, August 27, SPR launched an [online open house](#), which features key details about the 2020-2032 Strategic Plan, examples of how SPR is responding to the four crises we face: public health and well-being, a nationwide racial reckoning, economic uncertainty, and the increasing impacts of climate change, and a survey seeking community input on how SPR can serve our community's changing needs in the years to come. The input received will inform our short-term action planning and the development of financial priorities for the 2023-2028 cycle of the Seattle Park District. The survey will be available until Wednesday, October 13.

On Monday, August 30, reporter Dan Beekman published [an article](#) describing the site and survey and encouraging Seattle Times readers to participate.

By the Numbers: By end of day Sunday, August 29, the site had **747** total page views, **224** total visitors, and **81** survey responses representing **25** zip codes. The survey is available in **8** languages.

Themes:

- Concerns about safety, homelessness, and illegal activity in parks
- Majority of respondents used parks and open spaces during the pandemic
- Access to outdoor programs and activation is very important
- Strong interest in increase tree canopy to create shaded areas to mitigate heat
- Interest in for recreation facility hours on weekday mornings, weekday evenings, and weekends



- Interest in environmental education and health and fitness programs
- Interest in staff focusing on customer service, emergency response, and cultural awareness

[Visit the Open House](#)

In-Person Survey Work



{Image Description: The logo and banner for SPR's annual Big Day of Play, held on August 21, 2021, and one of the community events at which the Community Engagement Ambassadors conducted survey work.}

SPR staff out in the field through the Park Ambassador program are conducting intercept surveys with park users at 6 popular regional parks, including Alki, Gas Works, Golden Gardens, Green Lake, Magnuson, and Seward. Additionally, SPR's Community Engagement Ambassadors are conducting survey work, including offering in-language interpretation support, at community events, which during this period included the Adefua Cultural Education Workshop, BAZOOKAFEST, and the Big Day of Play.

By the Numbers:

During the time period, Park Ambassadors conducted surveys at **6 popular parks**, Community Engagement Ambassadors attended **3 community events**, and by the end of day Sunday, August 29, a total of **209 surveys** were collected between the two groups representing **40** zip codes.

Themes:

- Majority of respondents expressed significant concerns about addressing the impacts of homelessness, with some offering support for compassionate care for unhoused populations
- Desire for improved athletic field maintenance



- Frustrating about outdated signs for capital projects and wayfinding
- Primary uses during the pandemic were parks and open spaces, outdoor sports facilities, and socially distanced outdoor programs
- Primary barrier to accessing programs and services was lack of awareness about what is available
- Respondents most looking forward to ramp up of aquatic activities and additional community events and gatherings
- Strong interest in health and fitness and arts and culture programming
- Strong preference for digital communication to stay connected (newsletter, website, social media)

Superintendent Listening Sessions

Seattle Parks and Recreation Superintendent Jesús Aguirre and a team of SPR staff also attended three listening sessions with community organizations to have focused conversations and hear input about SPR's role in supporting recovery and priorities for the future. To identify organizations to connect with, SPR staff prioritized organizations that serving historically marginalized populations and/or serving areas of highest disadvantage according to the City's [Race and Social Equity Index](#).

By the Numbers: 3 listening session discussions held in this timeframe with a total of **59** participants, including with the [Victory Heights Community Council](#) on August 17th, [Beacon Food Forest](#) on August 24th, and [El Centro de la Raza](#) on August 26th.

Themes:

- Respond to homelessness & encampments to increase/restore access to natural areas.
- Facilitate community groups doing cleanups and holding community events to activate and build stewardship of neighborhood parks.
- Consider how to blend/best coordinate between SPR programs and similar offerings from community organizations to avoid duplication and best serve community.
- Hire local staff to run programs to increase relevance and bolster economy.
- Community gardens, urban farms, and P-Patches are a great way to support health outcomes and build community.
- SPR needs to build capacity to go into communities and ask neighbors of park development projects what they want to see.
- Offer programs in multiple languages to improve access to all communities.



Program Engagement



{Image Description: SPR Planning, Development, and Maintenance team member Carlos Muniz engaging with attendees at the Celebrate Little Saigon event on August 28th.}

In addition to system-wide engagement activities, Seattle Parks and Recreation program staff are reaching out to communities they serve through their programs, services, and planning. During this time period, staff from the Planning, Development, and Maintenance Division and the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) conducted outreach tailored to their work. The GSP team launched engagement work before this time period, so some events summarized here included events in late July and early August.

By the Numbers: **3** community events and **3** meetings reaching a total of **258** participants. Survey responses received in **5** languages. Events included: Celebrate Little Saigon event on August 28th, community workshop with ECOSS on July 29th at Seward Park, the Duwamish River Festival on August 7 at South Park Plaza, the West Duwamish Trails monthly meeting on August 10th, a survey with New GSP Forest Stewards conducted on August 6th, and a GSP-hosted workshop on centering anti-racist actions held on August 12th.

Themes:

- Spending time outdoors with family is a high priority
- Interest in youth inclusion
- Add celebration to build community
- Social media is not best way to communicate
- Distrust of landholding institution
- Allow BIPOC people to regain influence
- Concerns about the safety and appearance of trails
- Need to support community organizations and foster skill sharing
- SPR seems “swamped, understaffed, underfunded”



- Critical to build climate change resilience
- Explore programs in places less natural and forested
- Support for additional dog off-leash areas
- Strongly divided opinions on unhoused populations within parks
- Value of for natural areas for plants and wildlife, access to water, trails and walkways and usable and flexible open space
- Strong preference for online surveys for expressing thoughts and opinions

Stay Engaged!



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www.sprstrategicplan.infocommunity.org

Open until October 13!



Send Questions & Comments

PKS_SPRStrategicPlan@seattle.gov



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August 30-September 12, 2021

Online Open House



{Image Description: One of the sections of the Online Open House in which visitors can expand different windows and learn more about the four key pieces of SPR's 2020-2032 Strategic Plan: Healthy People, Healthy Environment, Strong Communities, and Organizational Excellence. Pictures clockwise from top left: an Aqua Zumba class at Rainier Beach Pool, a picnic table overlooking Lake Washington, a stone sculpture at the Japanese Garden at the University of Washington Arboretum, and a young family voting on park amenities at Parks and Rec Fest in the summer of 2019.}

Visitors to SPR's [online open house](#) continued to climb during this two-week period. This interactive site features key details about the 2020-2032 Strategic Plan, examples of SPR's work, a video of Superintendent Jesús Aguirre providing an overview of our approach to recovery, and a survey seeking community input on how SPR can serve our community's changing needs in the years to come. The survey will be available until Wednesday, October 13.

By the Numbers: During this time period, the site had **12,226** total page views, **4,140** total visitors, and **2,262** survey responses representing **79** zip codes. The survey is available in **8** languages, with responses received in **4** languages to date (English, Korean, Spanish, and Tagalog). Respondents indicated **35** different languages spoken at home.

Respondents who answered the optional demographic questions indicated the following racial identities: **10%** Asian/Pacific Islander, **4%** American Indian or Alaska Native, **5%** Black or African American, **5%** Hispanic or Latino, **3%** Middle Eastern or North African, **2%** Native Hawaiian, and **72%** White.

Themes:

- Addressing homelessness impact in parks is extremely important (more than 86 percent of all respondents marked as very important)
- Strong interest in programming around health and fitness, arts and culture, environmental education, sustainability, and stewardship
- Outdoor programming is very important to respondents, as are security staff or park rangers, while childcare services are not as important to respondents
- Interest in weekend morning and afternoon recreation programming as well as weekday nights
- Respondents most often willing to travel up to 20 minutes to recreation services, with vehicular and pedestrian travel most popular

[Visit the Open House](#)

In-Person Survey Work

SPR staff out in the field through the Park Ambassador program are conducting intercept surveys with park users at 6 popular regional parks, including Alki, Gas Works, Golden Gardens, Green Lake, Magnuson, and Seward.

By the Numbers: During this time period, Park Ambassadors conducted surveys at **6 popular parks**, and by the end of day Sunday, September 12, a total of **184** surveys were collected between the two groups representing **40** zip codes.

Respondents who answered the optional demographic questions indicated the following racial identities: **9%** Asian/Pacific Islander, **1%** American Indian or Alaska Native, **5%** Black or African American, **8%** Hispanic or Latino, **1%** Middle Eastern or North African, and **68%** White.

Themes:

- Extension of Mount Baker/ Lake Washington drive closure during the rest of the year/indefinitely
- Address camping in parks while treating unhoused neighbors with dignity and respect
- Expressed love of parks and appreciation for SPR staff
- Development of the Lincoln Park Playground is critical to Lincoln Park users
- Increase park and comfort station maintenance
- Increase access to aquatics activities (ie. restart swimming lessons and extend pool hours)
- Consider composting in parks

Listening Sessions



{Image Description: SPR Superintendent Jesús Aguirre conducting a listening session with community members assembled by Lake City Collective at Little Brook Park. Image on the left shows Superintendent Aguirre responding to a question from participants, and the image on the right shows participants assembled on benches and at picnic tables at the park.}

During this period, Seattle Parks and Recreation Superintendent Jesús Aguirre and a team of SPR staff also facilitated two listening sessions with community organizations to have focused conversations and hear input about SPR's role in supporting recovery and priorities for the future. Additionally, members of the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners facilitated listening sessions with two of their peer City Commissions.

By the Numbers: 4 listening session discussions held in this timeframe with a total of **56** participants. Superintendent listening sessions with community organizations included **Feet First** on September 1st and **Lake City Collective** on September 4th, and City Commission listening sessions included the **Urban**

Forestry Commission on September 1st and the **Immigrant and Refugee Commission** on September 7th.

Themes:

- Improve pathways for community-prioritized projects to receive funding
- SPR needs to go to where communities are, not expect them to come to the City, and sustain ongoing, human connections
- Additional clarity needed on how SPR projects are prioritized
- Redistribution of resources required to truly invest equitably, which will be hard
- System-level approach to homelessness response is essential
- Culturally relevant programming requires staff from within communities
- Improved language access (programming, wayfinding) is essential for equity and access
- Recruit and hire from within communities that SPR serves
- Add tree canopy to mitigate heat island effect

Program Engagement

In addition to system-wide engagement activities, Seattle Parks and Recreation program staff are reaching out to communities they serve through their programs, services, and planning. During this time period, staff from the Planning, Development, and Maintenance Division and the Green Seattle Partnership conducted engagement activities.

By the Numbers: 1 community event (community walk in Georgetown) and 1 meeting (with Last 6000 Steering Committee) reaching a total of **19** participants.

Themes:

- Consideration that equity focus on south end of city; deep north too
- Concern about climate change impacts
- Interested in educational walks with City arborists
- Preference for online surveys as engagement strategy as well as community organized gatherings
- Desire for spaces for gathering and cultural events

Preference for landscaped areas with trees and plants, natural areas, and flexible

Emails

Seattle Parks and Recreation also hosts a central email address for questions or concerns park and recreation users, PKS_SPRStrategicPlan@Seattle.gov.

By the Numbers: During this time period, SPR received **145** emails to this address.

Themes:

- Significant concerns expressed in 60+ emails about park safety, aesthetics, and impact on park users related to homelessness
- Equity implications of park naming
- Support for indoor fitness at pools, swim programming, all gender swims
- Interest in increasing or improving park maintenance across the system, particularly on Lake Washington Boulevard, Queen Anne Boulevard, Green Lake, 7 Hill Park, Alki, Rodgers Park, on trails, and in public restrooms
- Advocacy for multiple location-specific improvements/projects, including Be'er Sheva Park, West Point Lighthouse, Burke Gilman Trail, Green Lake Community Center, Lake City Community Center, Wedgwood Land-banked Site
- Desire for more off-leash areas & spray parks
- Support to build additional skate parks
- Inquiries about availability of indoor recreation services and suggestion for vaccine requirements to enable drop-in use
- Support for additional environmental education

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