



Seattle  
Parks & Recreation



**HEALTHY PEOPLE  
HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT  
STRONG COMMUNITIES**

A STRATEGIC PLAN  
FOR SEATTLE PARKS  
AND RECREATION  
2020-2032



WHO WE  
ARE  
WHAT WE  
BELIEVE

**S**eattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) stewards a thriving and diverse system of parks, natural areas, community centers, boulevards, trails, playgrounds, fields and courts, pools, beaches, and so much more. This system has a rich history extending back over 135 years and plays an important role in keeping Seattle a dynamic and connected community as the city continues to grow and change. Our parks and recreation system connects Seattle’s residents and visitors to nature, provides opportunities to stay healthy and improve well-being, and celebrates the vibrancy of our city.

## OUR VISION

- **HEALTHY PEOPLE**
- **HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT**
- **STRONG COMMUNITIES**

## OUR VALUES

- **EQUITY**
- **OPPORTUNITY**
- **ACCESS**
- **SUSTAINABILITY**

## OUR MISSION

**SEATTLE PARKS AND RECREATION PROVIDES WELCOMING AND SAFE OPPORTUNITIES TO PLAY, LEARN, CONTEMPLATE AND BUILD COMMUNITY, AND PROMOTES RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP OF THE LAND.**

*We acknowledge that our parks and facilities are on Indigenous land, the traditional territories of the Coastal Salish peoples.*

This document is a Strategic Plan to guide Seattle Parks and Recreation’s programming, services, and investments from 2020-2032. To guide our work, this plan is organized into the following sections:

## **WHY PLAN NOW & PLANNING FOUNDATIONS** ..... P. 5

Makes the case for how much Seattle has changed since our 2014 Parks Legacy Plan, and identifies our approach to this planning process.

## **PATHWAY TO EQUITY** ..... P. 8

States our departmentwide commitment to dismantling systemic racism and achieving racial equity.

## **WHAT WE OFFER** ..... P. 10

Showcases a snapshot of the services, programs, and spaces we offer the Seattle community.

## **WHERE WE’RE GOING** ..... P. 11

Identifies a citywide vision, SPR’s specific levers of change, connection to the Pathway to Equity, and strategies aligned with each of the three pillars of our vision and a fourth category supporting all three.

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## **APPENDIX I** ..... P. 20

Shares additional context informing our work, including our history of continuous planning, a compilation of our services, programs, and spaces, and a summary of public engagement methods and outcomes supporting the development of this plan.



# WHY PLAN NOW?

Seattle has changed dramatically since Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) prepared its Parks Legacy Plan in 2014. Our city is facing increasing density, a growing wealth gap, and a continued homelessness crisis.

## SEATTLE'S GROWTH OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS

**105,000+**

new residents<sup>1</sup>

**100,000+**

new jobs<sup>2</sup>

**44,000+**

new housing units<sup>3</sup>

**↑ 39%**

household income<sup>4</sup>

**25%**

poverty rate in Black & American Indian/Alaska native communities<sup>5</sup>

**88,000**

residents living below poverty line in 2019<sup>6</sup>

**↑ 26%**

unsheltered individuals in Seattle<sup>7,8</sup> since 2015

**2.5X**

ratio of median White to Black household income<sup>9</sup>

# WHY PLAN NOW

Seattle has grown significantly faster than anticipated in the City's Comprehensive Plan: *Seattle 2035*. In the first five years since its publication, most of the 20-year population growth target has been met. In 2020, the City will begin a Comprehensive Plan update that will refine these projections, and we are anticipating continued upward trends of population and employment growth.

This growth is making existing livability, affordability, and transportation challenges more difficult for our residents, and placing

additional strain on our parks, open spaces, and facilities. Our region continues to feel the impacts of climate change firsthand, and over the past five years we've experienced more high heat days, observed decreasing snowpack in the Cascades, and been subject to increasingly poor air quality from wildfire smoke. This changing context has underscored the need for SPR to provide affordable, accessible programming that helps maintain the livability of our city and the importance of safe, connected indoor and outdoor spaces for the community to gather, be active, and connect with the natural environment.

We need a new Strategic Plan that will guide our priorities and investments over the next 12 years. When determining our planning horizon, we looked for a timeframe that was long enough to think big and align with other planning processes. The 2020-2032 span takes SPR through the next two cycles of the Seattle Park District, two additional iterations of the Parks and Open Space Plan, and the next update to the City's Comprehensive Plan.

As we consider how to tackle the challenges that our city and our parks and recreation system are facing, we must recognize that communities of color who have been historically underserved – and often mis-served by our institutions – are at greater risk of being further negatively impacted by these challenges. We must prioritize addressing historical racial inequity as we pursue opportunities to improve mental and physical health, combat climate change, plan for continued growth, and increase the vibrancy of our city. To help inform our next steps in balancing these pressures and opportunities, we

decided to check in with the community to ensure we are moving forward in a direction that will best serve Seattle's evolving needs. Continuing and deliberate community conversations allow us to touch base with residents about how priorities have evolved over the past few years and to adjust and course-correct our strategic direction and funding priorities. SPR anticipates continuing these conversations throughout the life of this Strategic Plan and beyond, and staff will implement the plan through development of annual work plans, the biennial budget process, and the six-year Park District financial plan.



## PLANNING FOUNDATIONS

As SPR set out on the path to identify strategies to guide its investments, programming, and services, we framed our planning effort through several foundational principles:

### SERVING PEOPLE

We create and implement programs, and build and maintain great spaces and facilities to serve the needs of our residents. Our facilities, parks, open spaces, and other amenities must support our focus on meeting these resident needs.

### COMMITTING TO RACIAL EQUITY

We will focus on race and social justice in the way we plan, build, and program.

### EMBRACING NEW WAYS OF DOING THINGS

The challenges our city and our residents face are new, and so we must be open to the idea that the way we respond to these changes won't always be the same as we've used before.

### RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The effects of climate change are being felt in our city, in our communities, and in our parks. We must work to mitigate these effects and protect those most vulnerable. We must also adapt our operations to mitigate our impact, and use our spaces, programs, staff, and influence to promote responsible stewardship of Seattle's resources.

### HONORING THE DIVERSITY AND HISTORY OF OUR CITY, WHILE BUILDING THE SEATTLE OF THE FUTURE

All our work must be both sustainable and flexible with respect to the city we are, and the one we are becoming.

### SUPPORTING SOLUTIONS TO CITYWIDE CHALLENGES

Seattle Parks and Recreation prioritizes inclusiveness, affordability, innovation, accessibility, and livability as we seek comprehensive efforts to support Seattle residents.

### ENGAGING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

We must engage in ongoing discourse with our community to be responsive to the constant change that affects our residents.

### DELIVERING EXCELLENT SERVICE

We need to build and maintain internal capacity in order to deliver excellent service in all aspects of our work, and innovate to deliver next and best practices to our residents.

# PATHWAY TO EQUITY

SPR is committed to advancing the City of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative. We are unveiling a new way to approach our work called Pathway to Equity, which is a roadmap for SPR to play our part to end institutional and structural racism and achieve racial equity in Seattle.



## OUR COMMITMENT TO AN EQUITABLE PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

SPR is dedicated to undoing racism and building racial equity, gender equity, and social justice in our programs and services. We recognize inequities and disparities continue to exist with the perpetuation of institutionalized racism through factors such as the prevalence of white supremacy culture characteristics, inequitable distribution of power, and lack of accountability. We also recognize that as members of the very institutions that have perpetuated this, we must be a part of the solution. Therefore, we will act and invest boldly to dismantle these characteristics, resulting in a culture centered on equity and social justice norms.

We will actively center equity in our decision-making, investments, and planning. We will acknowledge and address disparities through the implementation of practices designed to disrupt historical and current race-based marginalization and disenfranchisement.

Our focus is equity (the distribution of resources that takes into account past history and current position, so that future outcomes are fairly distributed), and not equality (the distribution of resources so all receive the same amount regardless of past history, current position, or future outcome).

We are committed to bringing park and recreation resources to those who have been overlooked and underserved - and, in fact, mis-served - by discriminatory policies, practices, and histories.

Our Pathway to Equity begins with policy and procedure reform; workforce development; prioritizing equity when planning and budgeting; staff training; and increasing accountability to communities of color.

Each of the four priorities in this Strategic Plan is paired with a step in SPR's Pathway to Equity. We firmly believe SPR can best serve our community today and in the future by leading with equity in our strategic planning and in our actions.

# PATHWAY TO EQUITY VISION

Seattle Parks and Recreation envisions programs, policies, and funding that create equitable outcomes, as well as strategies and actions that show measurable results toward our vision of healthy people, a healthy environment, and strong communities.

## STEPS WE'RE TAKING NOW

- Developing an SPR Equity and Engagement Plan to implement the City's equity goals.
- Developing an equity scorecard and map for resource allocation and planning that leverages data to identify and address disparities in underserved areas and for underserved groups.
- Revamping SPR's Race and Social Justice Initiative Outcomes, Strategies, and Actions (ROSA)<sup>10</sup> to more intentionally ensure an equity lens is woven throughout our work.
- Training all SPR staff about the Pathway to Equity.
- Conducting robust and culturally responsive community outreach and engagement.
- Developing an equity dashboard and performance indicators as part of department-wide performance management efforts.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ...

### WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE<sup>11</sup>

A set of rules, norms, values and standards of acceptance that creates a set of expectations (both implicit and explicit) that work to the benefit of those who are White and to the detriment of people of color. Adopting antidotes to a range of white supremacy culture characteristics enables organizations to shift the culture of knowingly and unknowingly showing privilege.

### INSTITUTIONAL RACISM<sup>12</sup>

Policies, practices, procedures and culture of an institution or system that work better for White people and cause harm to people of color, often inadvertently or unintentionally.

### SYSTEMIC RACISM<sup>13</sup>

The history, culture and current reality of racism across institutions and/or systems; when the institutional racism of multiple institutions overlaps to form a web of racism

impacting people and communities of color. This includes implicit and explicit social narratives about race.

### RACIAL EQUITY<sup>14</sup>

When a person's race no longer predicts social, economic and political outcomes. Currently, racial inequities exist across all indicators for success in Seattle, such as income, health, education and involvement in the criminal justice system.

### SOCIAL JUSTICE NORMS

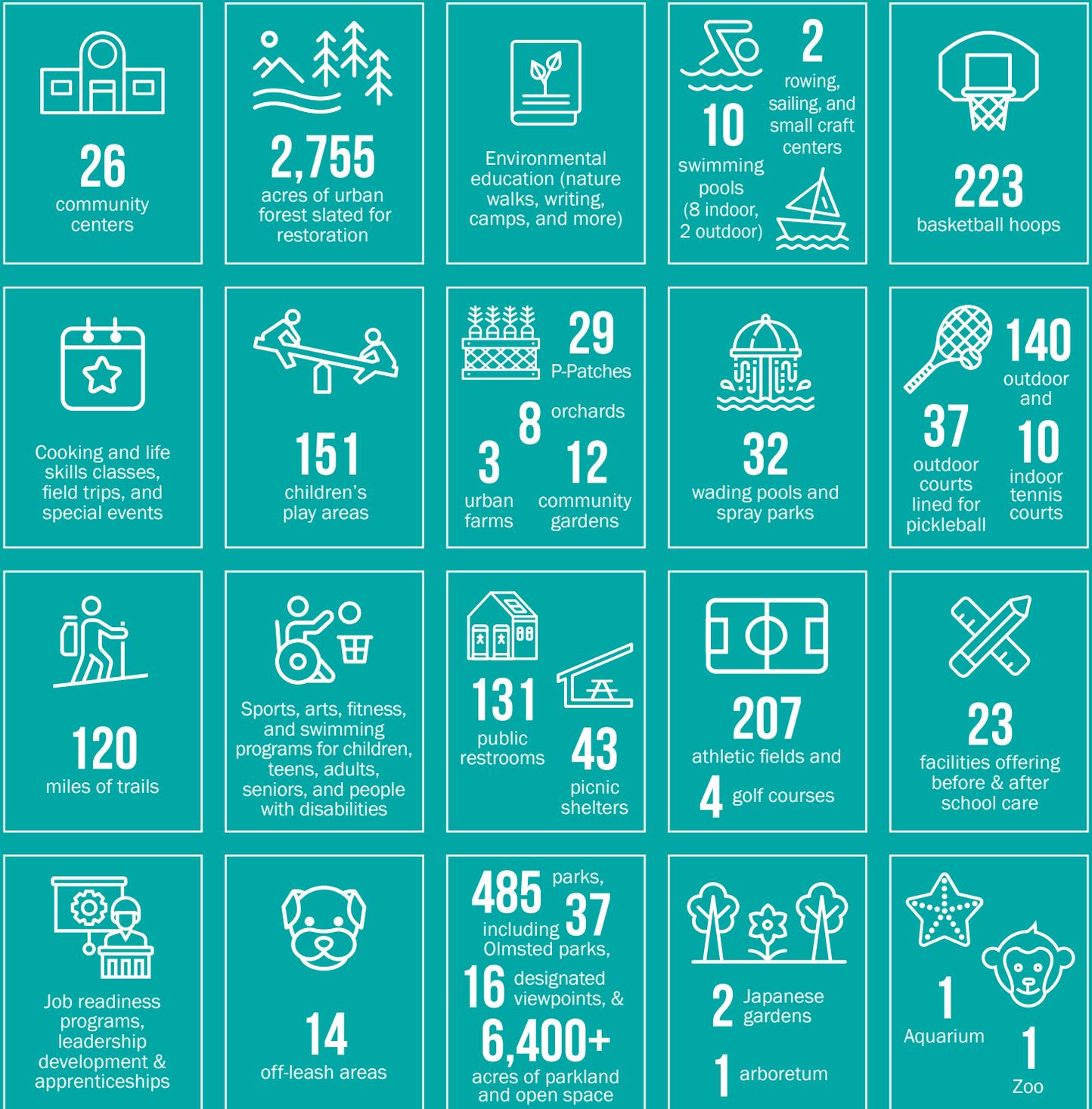
Standards of acceptance and community practice that do not uphold unjust treatment on the grounds of race, gender, age, abilities, sexual orientation or identity, or other characteristics.

### EQUITY-CENTERED

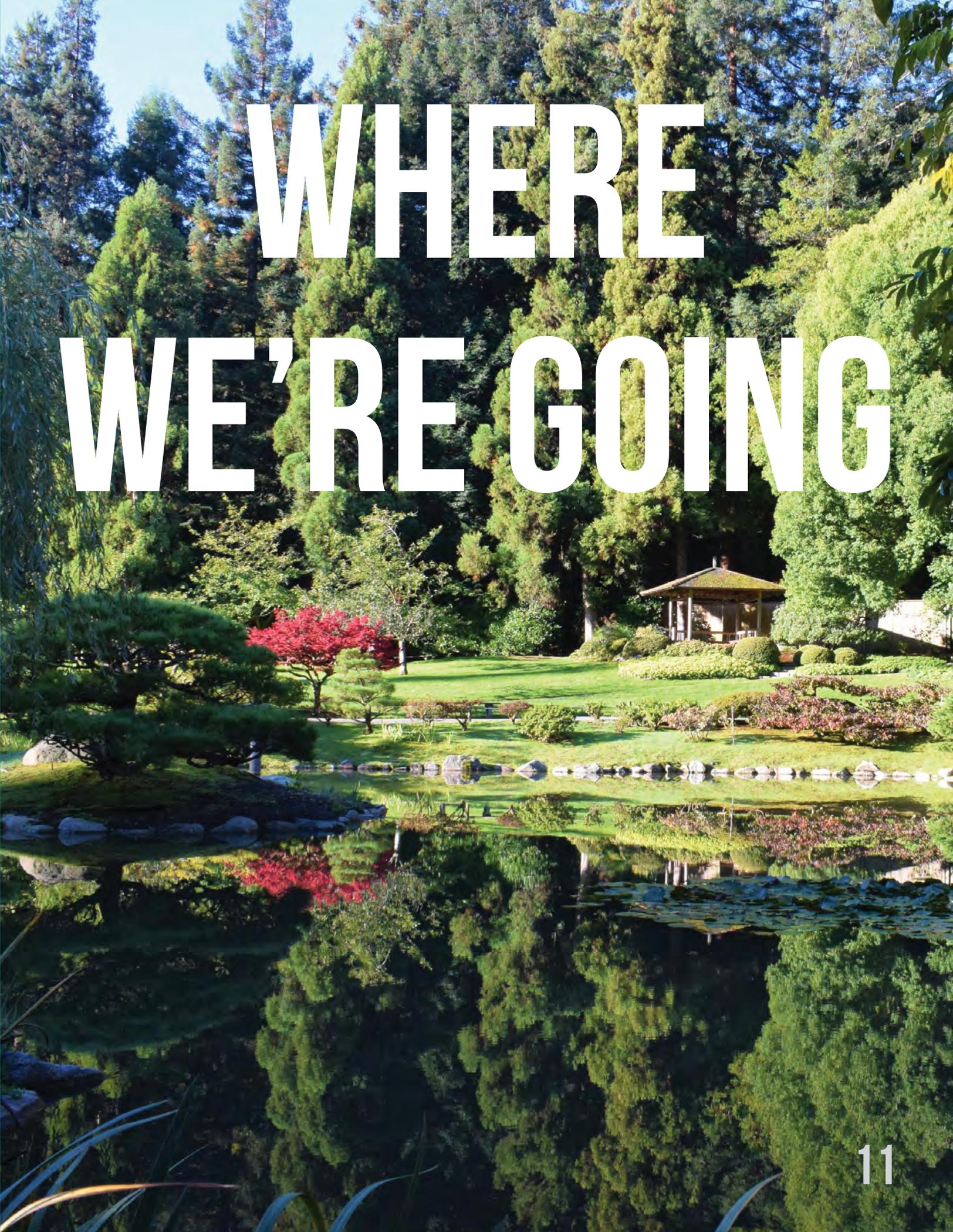
Intentional decision-making and actions anchored in fairness of results and outcomes.

# WHAT WE OFFER

SPR provides a wide range of facilities, programs, and infrastructure across our system. Below is a snapshot of some of the spaces and services we use to bring communities together, get people active, and connect them with nature. For a more complete list of SPR's offerings and assets, please see Appendix I.



... and so much more!

A photograph of a traditional Japanese garden. In the foreground, a calm pond reflects the surrounding landscape. The middle ground features a well-manicured lawn with various shrubs and a small, traditional wooden pavilion with a thatched roof. The background is dominated by a dense forest of tall, slender evergreen trees. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

# WHERE WE'RE GOING



# HEALTHY PEOPLE

## OUR CITYWIDE VISION FOR A HEALTHY POPULATION

Healthy people are active and moving around, feel safe and welcomed in public spaces across the city, have access to affordable, fresh food, and practice healthy habits that prevent disease and enhance physical and mental well-being.

### WHAT WE KNOW

- Regular exercise and fitness activities are critical to our health.
- Teaching healthy habits from an early age can help establish life-long eating and exercise patterns.
- Spending time outdoors improves our physical and mental health.<sup>15</sup>
- Recess time for children increases physical activity and improves educational performance.
- Significant physical and operational barriers to access exist across our public facilities.
- Many people in our communities experience food insecurity, or the uncertainty of having enough food to feed family members.<sup>16</sup>
- Low-income communities face significant challenges accessing affordable health care and are disproportionately uninsured; they have the greatest reported unmet medical needs, and the highest rates of incomplete vaccinations.<sup>17</sup>
- Adults are living longer and are at higher risk of social isolation, which poses significant risks to cognitive function, longevity, and quality of life.<sup>18</sup>
- Access to and a sense of safety around water for recreation and leisure activities is crucial to Seattle residents.

### STATE OF PLAY REPORT

A September 2019 analysis jointly conducted by King County, the University of Washington, and the Aspen Institute on how well youth are being served through sports, play, and outdoor recreation in Seattle/King County offered several key findings:

- Only 19% of youth in King County meet the 60 minutes of physical activity per day recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Infrastructure such as fields, facilities, and transportation cannot meet demand to support youth physical activities and youth, parents, and community leaders say it is difficult to find space for free, unscheduled play.
- 13% of youth haven't participated in organized sports or physical activities because of the cost.

## OUR IMPACT

As we consider the levers of change SPR can use to empower **HEALTHY PEOPLE**, we envision a parks and recreation system in which Seattle residents and visitors:

- Have access to recreational opportunities across our whole system, outside and inside, and in publicly- and privately-owned facilities and open spaces;
- Feel safe in all parks, trails, recreation facilities, and around water;
- Feel connected to and are active in nature;
- Participate in programming that builds healthy habits – such as getting people moving and providing fresh, nutritious food; and
- Can visit parks and facilities that are inclusively designed, sustainably maintained, and well connected to other public spaces.

## CONNECTION TO PATHWAY TO EQUITY

**STRIKING DISPARITIES:** Low-income communities of color in our region face disproportionate health disparities. Lack of access to affordable health care and healthy food can increase the risk for health conditions that disproportionately impact these communities, including obesity and chronic diseases like diabetes.<sup>19</sup> People of color, particularly children of color, also face disparities related to water safety, and have an increased risk of drowning.<sup>20</sup>

**OUR COMMITMENT:** We will focus our work in a way that seeks to eliminate racial health disparities.

## OUR STRATEGIES

What steps will we take to ensure a healthy Seattle population?

- HP1.** Provide a comprehensive and equitable portfolio of programs and activities that promote physical and mental wellness for children, youth, adults, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- HP2.** Make all parks, facilities, and programs accessible and inclusive, utilizing universal design principles with the goal of including people of all ages and abilities.
- HP3.** Maintain a high-quality system of spaces and facilities for community to gather, learn, recreate, and become healthy.
- HP4.** Ensure residents and visitors know about the different ways they can get moving and be active in our parks, natural areas, trails, pools, and community centers.
- HP5.** Prioritize land acquisitions and park enhancements to ensure that all Seattle residents live within a 10-minute walk from an accessible public space and/or high-quality recreational program.
- HP6.** Connect children, youth, and adults to nature, with a focus on historically underserved communities.
- HP7.** Improve equity and effectiveness across our community center system by redesigning our community center operations and programming and re-examining our current approach to geographic placement of community centers.
- HP8.** Get the most out of our current parks and facilities by converting single-use spaces into multi-functional spaces in order to serve more people within our system, including converting tennis courts into multi-sport courts, adding more paved pathways, and updating parks to meet changing community needs.
- HP9.** Build food security and enhance the resilience of our urban food system by creatively using our spaces and programming to increase access to and distribution of fresh, affordable food as well as nutrition education.



# HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

## OUR CITYWIDE VISION FOR A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Seattle becomes a national leader in mitigating climate change impacts, stewarding and protecting our urban forests and natural spaces, promoting environmental responsibility and environmental justice, and building resilient infrastructure.

### WHAT WE KNOW

- Human activities such as urbanization, destruction of forest resources and biodiversity, and increased emissions from burning coal, gas, and oil have negatively impacted our climate and ecosystems.
- Climate change has increased the occurrence of extreme weather events and environmental catastrophes including flooding, wildfires, and droughts.
- As one of the largest property owners in the city, SPR stewards parks, open spaces, shorelines, and healthy urban forests that provide crucial ecosystem services including stormwater management, carbon sequestration, clean air and water, and fish and wildlife habitat.
- Public assets such as the Woodland Park Zoo and the Seattle Aquarium contribute to community understanding of climate change and its impact on our oceans and on the world's animal species and inspire people to take action on conservation issues.

### RECENT EXAMPLES OF CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS IN SEATTLE

- Wildfire smoke created diminished air quality with 24 days of poor air quality in both 2017 and 2018.<sup>21</sup>
- Extreme heat days above 85 degrees from May to August totaled 27 in 2017 and increased to 32 in 2018. The historical average in Seattle is 10 days per year.<sup>22</sup>
- Seattle is predicted to experience 10 inches of sea level rise by 2050, 28 inches by 2100, and 47 inches by 2150.<sup>23</sup>

## OUR IMPACT

As we consider the levers of change SPR can use to ensure a **HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT**, we envision a parks and recreation system with:

- A thriving ecosystem where everyone has equitable use of, and responsibility for, public spaces;
- A healthy urban forest that cleans the air and soil and serves as a natural sanctuary for people and wildlife;
- Green infrastructure that builds resiliency by adapting to shifting weather patterns and sea level rise;
- Buildings and facilities that are not only carbon-neutral, but energy-producing;
- Community programming that instills knowledge about our ecosystem and connects residents to their natural environment;
- Community stewards who care for the parks and recreation system and help SPR protect it for future generations utilizing best environmental practices;
- A healthy ocean and marine environment that contributes to the health of the Seattle and Pacific Northwest ecosystem; and
- A balance between passive and active recreation.

## CONNECTION TO PATHWAY TO EQUITY

**STRIKING DISPARITIES:** In the U.S., people of color, low-income communities, and tribal populations have been disproportionately exposed to environmental conditions that can harm their health. Across the country, race is the most significant predictor of a person living near contaminated air, water, or soil, and in the Puget Sound region, sources of industrial pollution are disproportionately located near communities of color.<sup>24</sup> In Seattle's Duwamish Valley, residents are likely to have higher exposure to noise pollution, air pollution, and highways and lower access to environmental benefits like open space.<sup>25</sup>

**OUR COMMITMENT:** We will seek to minimize the impacts of climate change on those most vulnerable and use an environmental justice lens to prioritize the health and well-being of communities.

## OUR STRATEGIES

What steps will we take to ensure a healthy environment?

- HE1.** Manage our water resources sustainably in the face of climate change impacts through smart irrigation, stormwater management, preventative maintenance, water conservation and reuse, plant selection, and landscape management.
- HE2.** Reduce waste through recycling, composting, and responsible sourcing at SPR facilities, and promote education and programming encouraging waste reduction efforts for our tenants, partners, and community.
- HE3.** Drive toward operating a carbon-neutral park and recreation system by 2050 by implementing Seattle's Climate Action Plan, including investing in decarbonization infrastructure and reducing pollution and energy use in our parks, recreation facilities, pools, and construction projects.<sup>26</sup>
- HE4.** Develop new targets as we approach the Green Seattle Partnership's urban forest restoration goal, establishing a sustainable balance between restoration and maintenance of forests, forest canopy, natural areas, open spaces and ecological functions with a focus on wildlife habitat.
- HE5.** Preserve existing parkland to improve individual and community well-being as our city grows, particularly in historically underserved areas, and honor the heritage of our green space, including native history and our system's Olmsted legacy.
- HE6.** Work to make SPR's facilities available year-round in response to climate change impacts such as extreme heat, smoke, and snow.
- HE7.** Improve connectivity in our system by enhancing parks, open space, and trails in partnership with other City agencies and community organizations.
- HE8.** Innovate and investigate strategies and technologies, such as solar panels and geothermal wells to support resiliency and further combat effects of climate change.
- HE9.** Instill an appreciation of the natural environment through programming, events, and volunteerism to ensure future generations benefit from our natural assets and continue to steward them.
- HE10.** Continue to acquire land and responsibly develop new parks to increase availability of open space, with a focus in urban villages and communities historically lacking access.



# STRONG COMMUNITIES

## OUR CITYWIDE VISION FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES

A strong Seattle community affords universal access to housing, living-wage jobs, education, and safe spaces to congregate and forge social connections. Children have support for success in school and in life, adults have access to employment and economic opportunity, and all ages feel part of a connected, vibrant city.

## WHAT WE KNOW

- Strong communities are made up of residents who have economic and employment stability, feel connected to the community and each other, have opportunities for betterment, and have a sense of hope for the future.
- Creating opportunities for people to come together and be part of a connected community can positively impact mental health, well-being, and foster a sense of belonging and social cohesion.
- The City's wealth gap continues to grow, and many residents have not benefitted from the region's economic growth. This has resulted in an affordable housing crisis, which is a primary driver of homelessness.
- Approximately one in ten Seattle residents are living in poverty.<sup>27</sup>
- Most of the Puget Sound region's unsheltered population lives in Seattle. Families and children make up a sizable portion of that population.<sup>28</sup>
- Affordable, equitable, and high-quality early learning opportunities can result in lifelong positive impacts.<sup>29</sup>
- Partners and volunteers can expand the reach of public services and engage residents and community organizations in stewardship of our resources and community assets.
- Gaining early job experience can positively impact future job prospects and financial stability.

## OUR IMPACT

As we consider the levers of change SPR can use to build **STRONG COMMUNITIES**, we envision a parks and recreation system in which:

- We support citywide efforts to address the crises of affordability, growing economic disparity, and homelessness;
- Everyone has access to affordable, culturally relevant educational, recreation, and arts programming;
- We provide services and programs that build community cohesion, life skills, and life-long learning;
- We provide programs and facilities that serve as community gathering opportunities year-round and provide safe and welcoming spaces when needed; and
- We connect youth in the “hope stage” of development, link young people to role models, and provide support needed to take risks, fail, and try again.

## CONNECTION TO PATHWAY TO EQUITY

**STRIKING DISPARITIES:** Race-based disparities pervade our communities. In Seattle, White household income is more than twice that in Black/African American households.<sup>30</sup> The White/Black achievement gap in third grade is 3.7 grade levels, and White students graduate high school at significantly higher rates than students of color.<sup>31</sup> Risk factors disproportionately affecting American Indian, Black/African American, Pacific Islander, and multi-racial youth also contribute to higher rates of disengagement from work and school.<sup>32</sup> Black/African American youth are unemployed at twice the citywide rate,<sup>33</sup> and make up almost half the population in youth detention.<sup>34</sup>

**OUR COMMITMENT:** We will strengthen outreach and engagement opportunities while increasing opportunities for communities of color to have access to services that address these disparities and that are culturally and linguistically responsive.

## OUR STRATEGIES

What steps will we take to build strong communities?

- SC1.** Help students succeed in life through extended academic instruction and access to enrichment opportunities.
- SC2.** Contribute to Seattle’s goal of providing universal preschool, and continue supporting families with out-of-school-time childcare and programming.
- SC3.** Reevaluate our fee structure and scholarship model, increase free programming to eliminate socioeconomic barriers to our services, and streamline our registration systems to ensure equitable access.
- SC4.** Leverage our grant-making programs as opportunities to build community capacity in historically underserved areas and identify pathways to funding community-driven programs and projects.
- SC5.** Make parks safer by increasing neighborhood programming and working with community to identify priorities such as increased public presence through community-led activities, additional lighting where appropriate, needle disposal boxes, animal control, and increased frequency of maintenance.
- SC6.** Strengthen the City’s efforts to uplift individuals experiencing homelessness through expanding parks-based job training opportunities and respectful cleaning of unsanctioned encampments.
- SC7.** Build community by bringing people together to gather in and connect with private and public spaces and offering public events that reflect Seattle’s growth and vibrancy, are strategically distributed, programmatically diverse, and driven by community needs and interests.
- SC8.** Increase communication and outreach about SPR’s programs and places to better inform the public about the breadth of parks and recreation facilities and programs.
- SC9.** Reexamine our approach to community-based and public agency partnerships to supplement our work in meeting the needs of community members, including strengthening our infrastructure supporting volunteer efforts.
- SC10.** Enhance economic opportunities through job training, apprenticeships, and green economy employment, including doubling the size of the Seattle Conservation Corps.
- SC11.** Increase cleanliness, safety, and availability of public restrooms in our parks and facilities.



# ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

## OUR CITYWIDE VISION FOR ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

The City of Seattle is managed by a world-class local government with a high-quality, well-trained workforce that operates with a focus on excellence and professionalism, collaborates with community and partners, equitably delivers essential services, adapts to changing best practices, and embraces new technology and innovative ideas.

### WHAT WE KNOW

- Seattle's population has grown by almost a quarter since 2010.<sup>35, 36</sup>
- There is more demand on our parks and recreation system than ever.
- Delivery of excellent service requires a strong, diverse workforce connected to our mission and engaged in decision-making, effective organizational supports, and adequate resources and capacity.
- Consistently adopting advances in technology and process improvements enhances organizational performance.
- Transparency and accountability are fundamental principles for good governance and community trust.
- SPR has an important role to play in crafting city-wide solutions to affordability and livability challenges.

## OUR IMPACT

As we consider the levers of change SPR can use to grow our internal capacity to foster **ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE**, we envision:

- Decision-making grounded in principles of racial equity and targeted at dismantling systemic racism;
- Deliberate and ongoing engagement with our communities to ensure our facilities and services match their evolving needs;
- Recruiting, training, and developing a team committed to providing excellent public service;
- Expanded opportunities for youth job training, internships, and apprenticeships that can lead to fulfilling careers;
- Participating in a collaborative, seamless citywide team that tackles pressing challenges;
- An organizational structure that prioritizes inclusive decision-making and continual process improvement; and
- Having the resources to do our work well.

## CONNECTION TO PATHWAY TO EQUITY

**STRIKING DISPARITIES:** The City of Seattle has historically played a role in exacerbating racial disparities through redlining and other discriminatory practices. It is part of our role as public servants to recognize this history and take responsibility for changing our policy and practices to prioritize serving those who have historically been harmed and/or denied access.

**SPR'S COMMITMENT:** We will allocate resources strategically through a racial equity framework to prioritize local communities most impacted by structural racism, use an equity scorecard with identified equity zones, and shift cultural norms to first provide resources to those who need them most. We will conduct workforce development and training that places SPR in a position of accountability to end disparities in recruitment, hiring, retention, and professional development. We will evaluate and modify contracting policies to support these equity goals.

## OUR STRATEGIES

What steps will we take to build organizational excellence?

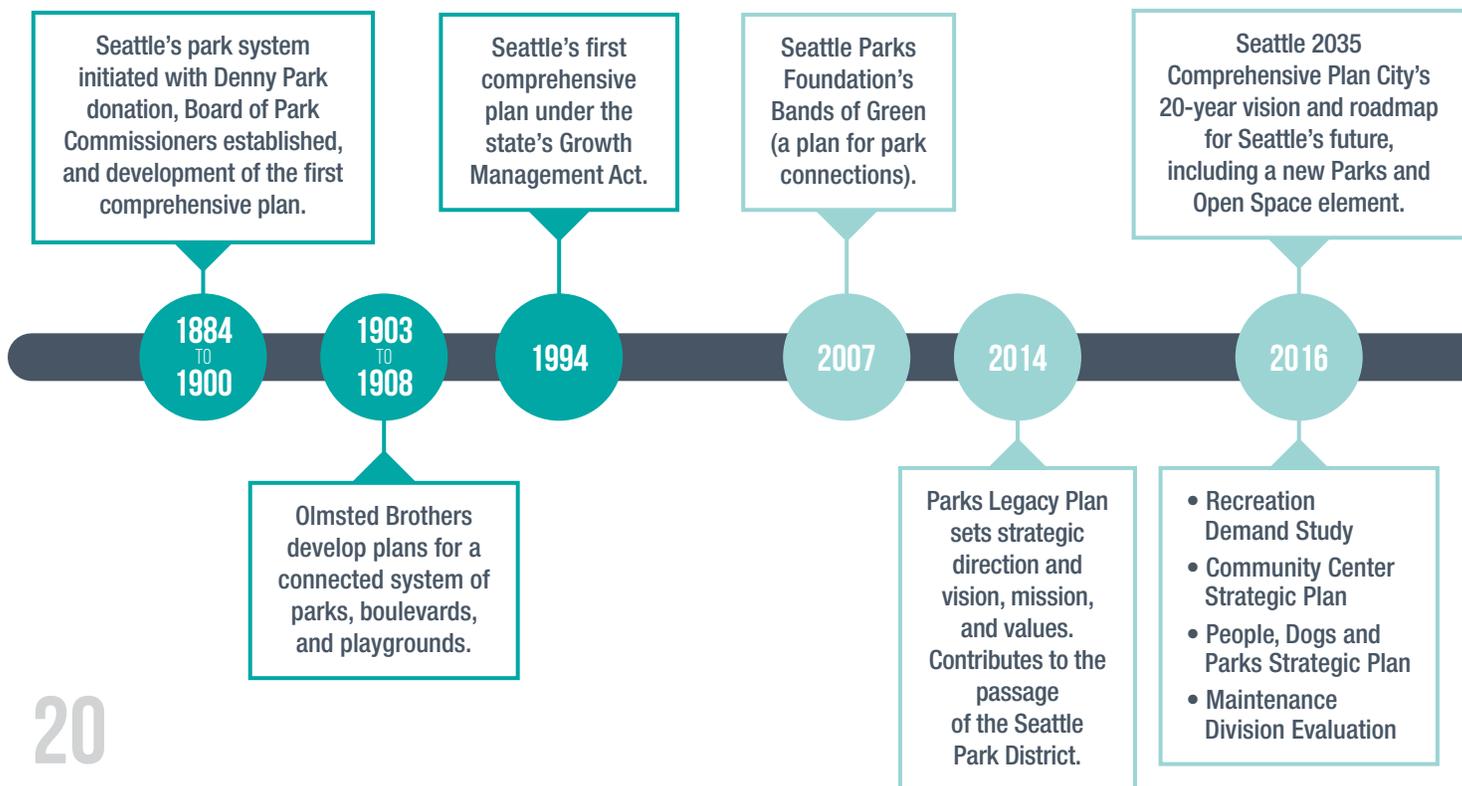
- OE1.** Develop and implement an equity analysis process for decision-making to prioritize investments and services in historically underserved communities and help ensure our programs and services are eliminating racial disparities.
- OE2.** Be a standard of excellence in our management and stewardship of Seattle's parks and recreation system by becoming a nationally accredited and award-winning parks and recreation agency.
- OE3.** Build and sustain a strong and appropriately sized workforce by recruiting, retaining, and developing staff and leadership that represent the communities we serve, transferring institutional knowledge, and proactively planning for retirements.
- OE4.** Enhance our ability to efficiently and effectively provide programs, services, and projects by investing in training to support direct services and operations, deepening our departmentwide commitment to racial equity, and employing fiscal responsibility.
- OE5.** Use new technologies and update our systems to enhance our organizational performance and public accountability, conduct data-informed analysis, and streamline public-facing systems (e.g., program registration, event scheduling, permitting, etc.).
- OE6.** Be responsive to community by listening for barriers to access, emerging interests, trends, and the needs of vulnerable populations through regular planning and ongoing engagement.
- OE7.** Continuously pilot and adopt new, innovative practices, designs, and programs and regularly re-evaluate existing policies and plans to challenge the status quo and better serve our changing population.
- OE8.** Collaborate among SPR divisions, with city-wide teams, and with other public and private partners to address issues related to livability, affordability, homelessness, and the environment.
- OE9.** Steward our facilities and infrastructure through a full life cycle-based approach and prioritize preventive maintenance to extend the lifespan of our assets and facilities.
- OE10.** Explore a new structure for SPR's advisory committees (e.g., the Board of Park Commissioners, Park District Oversight Committee, Advisory Councils, and "Friends of" groups) to maximize engagement opportunities and efficiency.



# APPENDIX I ■ PLANNING: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

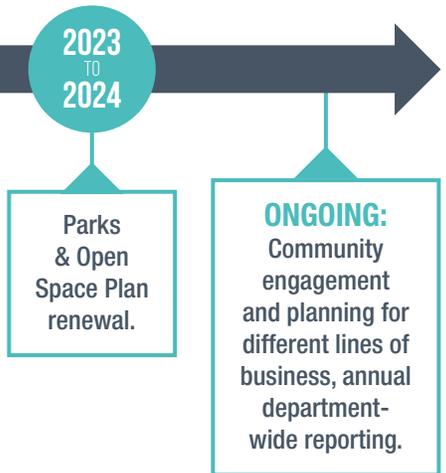
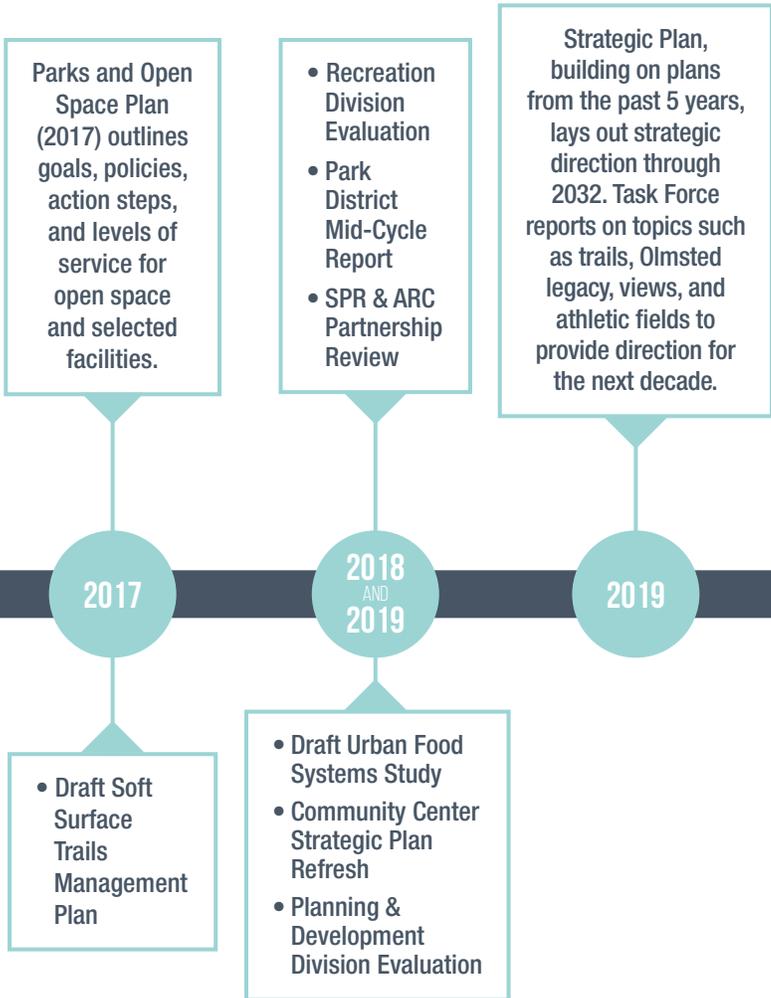
## PLANNING: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

This Strategic Plan builds upon years of planning in Seattle that began with two critical events: the establishment of the Parks and Recreation Department in the late 1800s, and the creation of plans (1903 and 1908) for an interconnected, comprehensive system of parks, boulevards, and facilities. Over the following decades, the park and recreation system has been expanded to accommodate the growing population and changing community needs. As our system has evolved, Seattle Parks and Recreation has conducted regular high-level and targeted planning efforts to guide and direct our work. Some foundational plans and recent and upcoming planning efforts are listed below.





# WHAT WE DO & WHO WE SERVE ■ ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY & OUTCOMES





# WHAT WE DO WHO WE SERVE

**S**PR's services and programs span a wide range of locations, topics, and activities. We have something for everyone, from tot treks to swimming programs for seniors – and so many things in between. The following inventory is intended to showcase the breadth of SPR's public-facing services – it is not comprehensive but provides a snapshot of what SPR offers and how our programs and services work to support our departmental vision.

# WE COULDN'T DO ANY OF THIS WORK WITHOUT OUR PARTNERS

*Including:* Associated Recreation Council • Woodland Park Zoo • Seattle Aquarium • Forterra • Friends of groups • University of Washington Botanic Gardens • The Arboretum Foundation • Tilth Alliance • Museum of History and Industry • Seattle Art Museum • Seattle Parks Foundation • Downtown Seattle Association • Friends of the Waterfront • Citizens for Off Leash Areas • Seattle Public Schools • Department of Education and Early Learning • Department of Neighborhoods • Seattle Public Utilities • Seattle City Light • Seattle Public Libraries • Seattle Department of Transportation • Office of Planning and Community Development • Other City of Seattle Departments • King County • and many more!

# HEALTHY PEOPLE

## WHY

**Healthy people are active and moving around, feel safe and welcomed in public spaces across the city, have access to affordable, fresh food, and practice healthy habits that prevent disease and enhance physical and mental well-being.**

## WHERE & HOW

swimming beaches (lifeguarded in the summer) • access to water sports (boating, sailing, rowing, stand-up paddle boarding, etc.) • golf courses (4 public facilities + 1 pitch n' putt course) • hiking & trails (120 miles) • 25 miles of boulevards • 10 swimming pools • 32 wading pools and spray parks (open and lifeguarded in summer) • 25 indoor toddler play areas • 140 outdoor tennis courts • 2 indoor tennis centers • 93 pickleball courts • 207 athletic fields • 223 basketball hoops • 11 skateparks • 2 stadiums • 151 children's play areas • bicycle Sundays • 13 outdoor fitness centers • 18 fishing piers

## WHO & WHAT

**YOUTH & TEENS:** sailing • rowing • volleyball • flag football • cross country • basketball • track and field • tennis • ultimate frisbee • lacrosse • soccer • martial arts • dance classes • cooking classes • late night • rock the park • summer of safety • family swim • water fun • swim lessons • swim team prep • swim league • diving • junior lifeguarding • synchronized swimming • water polo • homeschool lessons • personal lessons • school field trip programs • teen top chef • summer meal program • preschool programs • before/after school care

**ADULTS:** all gender swim event • lap swim • adult swim • women only swim • shallow water fitness • deep water fitness • hydrofit • aqua zumba • adult swim lessons • aqua jog • masters workout • improve your balance • drop-in adult basketball • adult softball leagues • men's flag football • women's flag football • women's roller derby • pickleball tournaments • drop-in pickleball • lawn bowling • tennis • boating • martial arts • Get Moving and Recreation for All programs (culturally relevant, community-led fitness opportunities) • community kitchens

**SENIORS:** senior swim • arthritis water exercise • water walking • stretch and flex • northwest senior games • dementia friendly recreation (field trips, dance, art, walks, fitness, volunteering) • LGBTQ programs (fitness, discussions, writing, movie night, trips, art, tai chi, gentle yoga) • aerobics • arthritis exercise • body conditioning • Chinese dance • circuit training • exercise to improve balance • minds in motion • nia • Parkinson's programs • pilates • chair classes • tai chi • dance (tap, thriller, world beat, line dancing) • yoga • zumba • sports (badminton, pickleball, table tennis, volleyball) • field trips (nature walks, seasonal trips, art/culture, lunch club) • special events (lectures, informational classes related to senior health) • sound steps walking program

**SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS:** sports (basketball, track & field, softball, golf, flag football, swimming, bowling) • yoga • afterschool programs • aquatics • cooking class • dance • H.E.A.L.T.H (Healthy eating Active Living Today Hooray!) • walking groups • fitness classes • Special Olympics

# HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

## WHY

**Seattle becomes a national leader in mitigating climate change impacts, stewarding and protecting its urban forests and natural spaces, promoting environmental responsibility and environmental justice, and building resilient infrastructure.**

## WHERE & HOW

12% of Seattle's land • 6,434 acres of open space • 485 parks • 2,755 acres of urban forest slated for restoration • 350 plant species • 31 terrestrial and marine mammal species • 225 bird species • 12 electric staff vehicles and charging stations • 4 Environmental Learning Centers • Over 1 million volunteer hours through the Green Seattle Partnership • Over 2,800 pounds of edible produce harvested on park land • 4 cleaner indoor air spaces at community centers • 2 specialty gardens • 236 guided tours at the Japanese Garden • 2,241 public trash cans • 330 public recycling bins • 531,595 plants and 123,277 trees planted since the establishment of the Seattle Park District • 1 arboretum • 12 community gardens • 3 urban farms • 30 P-patch programs • 8 park orchards • 1 zoo • 1 aquarium • 1 plant conservatory • 1 Audubon center • 1 Bee City USA Certification • Urban Bird Treaty city • 2 public electric vehicle charging stations • 23 community centers converted to tubular LED technology • 4 small facilities converted from fossil-fuel burning heat to electric heat pumps • 2 solar panel installations • 1 water shortage contingency plan in place • 235 properties with weather-attuned, automated irrigation stations • operational targets and priorities established by intra-departmental team • 1 irrigation team • best maintenance practices and policies • vegetation management policies

## WHO & WHAT

**YOUTH & TEENS:** outdoor expedition programs • tidepool walks • nature at night • mushroom walks • tot treks • birding • nature camps • writing in the wild • nature walks • beach walks • wildlife walks • junior naturalist program • salmon stewards program • school partnerships • Youth Green Corps

**ADULTS:** Green Seattle Partnership • Forest Stewards • Seattle urban nature guides • friends of groups • EarthCorps volunteers • trail restoration volunteer opportunities • park and specialty garden volunteer maintenance • Seattle volunteer naturalists • Magnuson nature docents • guided nature walks • urban food systems education programs



# STRONG COMMUNITIES

## WHY

**A strong Seattle community affords universal access to housing, living-wage jobs, education, and safe spaces to congregate and forge social connections. Children have support for success in school and in life, adults have access to employment and economic opportunity, and all ages feel part of a connected, vibrant city.**

## WHERE & HOW

26 community centers • 3 teen life centers • Over 75 indoor meeting facilities • 13 special amenity sites (reserved 345 times as of August 2019) • 43 picnic shelters (average of 737 events per year) • 11 bathhouses • 7 ballot drop boxes in parks or at community centers • 3 museums • 131 public restrooms • \$1.7 million in school-age care and preschool scholarships in 2019 • \$750,000 in recreation scholarships in 2019 • Over 130 art pieces • 5 amphitheatres • 14 off leash dog parks • 3 public marinas • 54 landmarked buildings • 6 visual and performing art facilities • 1 outdoor sculpture park • 11 indoor and 14 outdoor preschool sites • 23 facilities offering before/after school care in 2019 (some SPR, some SPS) • Children in Nature Network membership • National Parks and Recreation Association membership • Washington Parks and Recreation Association membership • City Park Alliance membership • Over 65 community meetings anticipated in 2019 • comfort station emphasis • encampment cleanups • evening and weekend maintenance shifts • park maintenance jamborees • trails maintenance program • park security program • 20 administrative offices, crew quarters, and shops

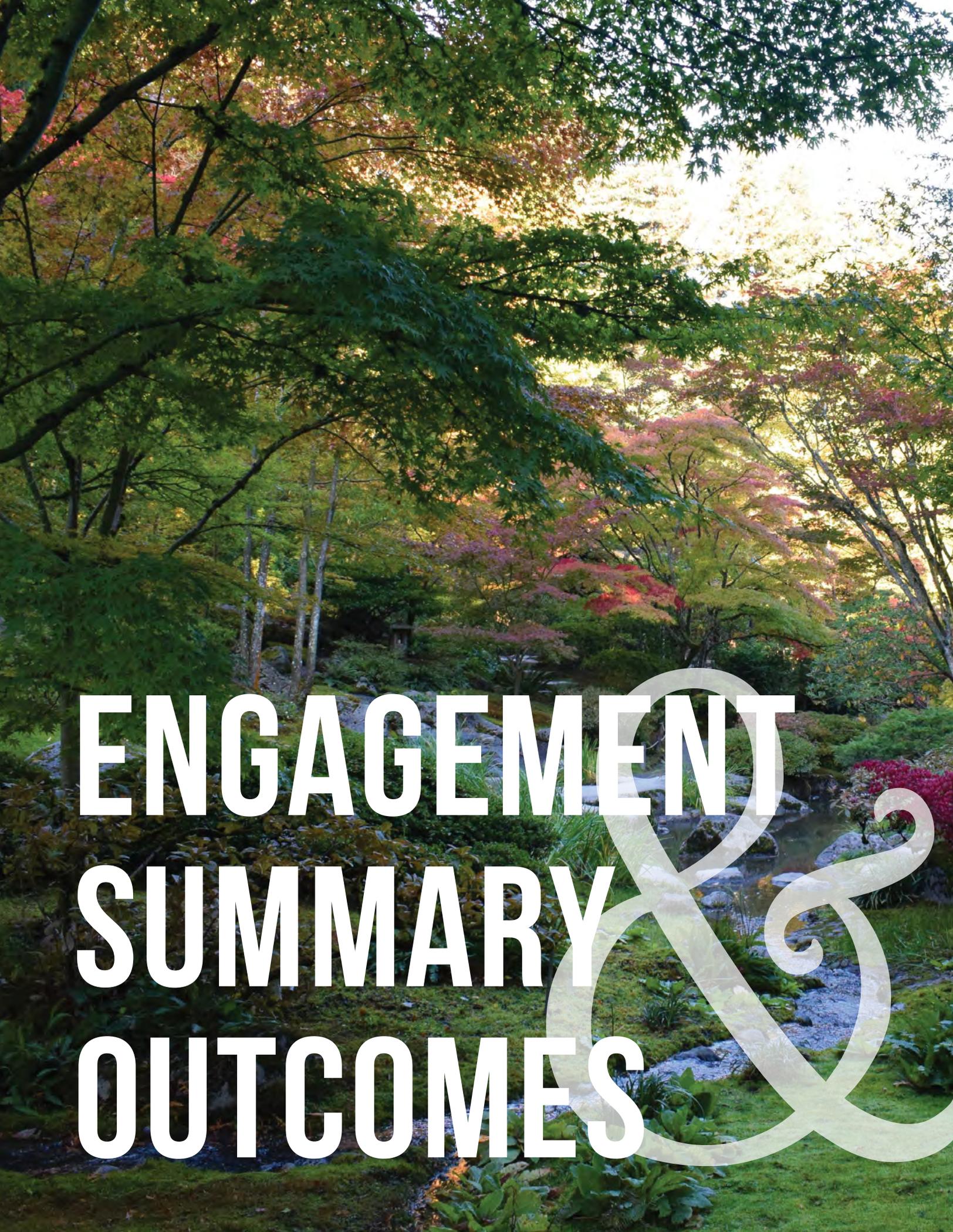
## WHO & WHAT

**YOUTH & TEENS:** children's theater performances • spring egg hunts • Halloween festivities • summer carnivals • back to school events • Teen Summer Musical • Seattle Youth Employment Program • youth summer learning programs • Late Night • youth engagement programs • mock trial program • after school programs • preschool programs • outdoor preschool • summer programs and camps • music instruction • My Brother's Keeper and My Sister's Keeper • job readiness classes • life skills training • leadership development • cooking classes • art classes • STEM programs • Teen Advisory Council • homeschool classes • service learning hours • Youth Green Corps • Center City programs (arts and crafts, outdoor movies, storytelling, family fun)

**ADULTS:** outdoor movie nights • Night Out neighborhood events • Art in Parks program • park concierge program • Parks Commons Program • Center City programs (happy hours, outdoor movies, concerts, gardening, fitness, games, books) • Seattle Conservation Corps • Japanese Garden tea ceremonies • community harvests and festivals • community kitchens • Parents' Night Out programs • pottery facilities and classes • self defense programs • music instruction • coaching and refereeing opportunities • computer facilities and classes • citizenship classes • tax preparation courses • table games • art classes • cooking classes • language classes • community meetings • Volunteer Inspection program

**SENIORS:** field trips • board games • movies • art programs • cooking classes • speaker series • book clubs • life skills classes • LGBTQ events and programs • caregiver support programs • computer skill programs

**SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS:** before/after school care for youth with disabilities • field trips • life skills • community service events • cooking classes • art programs • adult classes and activities



# ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY OUTCOMES



# WE HEARD FROM OVER 10,000 OF YOU!

## WHAT WE ASKED

**As we look forward to the next decade, we want to know...**

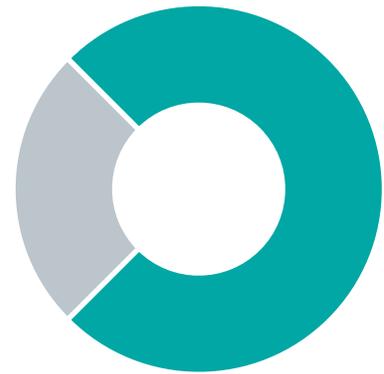
- How are Seattle parks, centers, and pools serving you, your family, and your neighbors?
- What park amenities really excite you?
- What park events and community center programs interest you?
- Seattle's got a lot on its plate (population growth, construction, rising prices, homelessness, new jobs and opportunities). How can Seattle Parks & Recreation help?

## HOW WE REACHED YOU

- Statistically valid survey of 400+ residents
- Over 50 social media discussions
- 8 online surveys reaching over 1,700 people
- Survey kiosks in all community centers and pools
- Weekly surveys to City staff
- Email address for comments
- Tabling at over 20 community events citywide
- Over 20 community listening meetings
- 2 large city-wide engagement events
- Surveys and questions asked in over 12 languages at community-led events and selected survey questions in the top six languages to reach underrepresented populations.

## WHO WE TALKED TO

- Homeowners and renters
- Children, youth, adults
- Recreation participants and non-participants
- Lifelong Seattle-ites and new arrivals
- Non-English speakers
- City employees



**OF MORE THAN 1,700  
PEOPLE SURVEYED, 75%  
SAID THEY PREFERRED  
NATURAL, FORESTED  
PARKS TO GARDENS &  
MANICURED LAWNS.**

# WHAT WE HEARD <sup>38</sup>



## Support Seattle's growth and density by...

- Preserving open space
- Making multi-use spaces in parks and community centers

## Embrace new ways of doing things, like...

- "Thaw the freeze" programs
- Adventure/nature play areas



## Support Seattle's transportation growth by...

- Thinking strategically about transit connection opportunities and parking constraints at parks and community centers



**"REPLACE WADING POOLS WITH SPRAY PARKS, THEY ARE MORE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL AGES AND ABILITIES."**

## Embrace new trends like...

- Pickleball
- Disc Golf
- Bike Tracks
- Roller Derby

**Help bring about racial equity through Seattle Parks & Recreation programs, events, and spaces.**



**"BETTER WALKING, BIKING, AND TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE IS NEEDED SO THAT ALL PEOPLE CAN BETTER ACCESS PARKS AND COMMUNITY CENTERS."**

## We need MORE ...

- Pickleball
- Pools
- Community center hours
- Green space
- Volleyball courts
- Trails and walking paths
- Movies and concerts
- Outdoor fitness equipment
- Classes and programs
- Art
- Benches
- Playgrounds
- Bathrooms

**“I WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE DIVERSITY IN OUR PROGRAMS WITH ACTIVITIES OR EVENTS THAT SHOWCASE POPULATIONS IN NEIGHBORHOODS DIFFERENT FROM OUR OWN ... BUILD A BIGGER, BETTER SENSE OF COMMUNITY. WE ARE GROWING TOO FAST AND HAVE LOST A COMMON THREAD. IT COULD BE THE PARKS THAT BRING US TOGETHER.”**



**Engage more with your community...**

- Improve your website, social media, and communication channels
- Better marketing of programs and events

**Mitigate the growing wealth gap by...**

- Providing low cost recreation opportunities for seniors, adults, youth, and children

**Keep maintaining and enhancing the existing park and recreation system by...**

- Repairing pools and community centers
- Keeping water fountains working
- Providing adequate staff for community centers, pools, and maintenance needs
- Keeping golf courses open to the public
- Repairing and cleaning restrooms
- Maintaining trails and paths
- Protecting wildlife



**Make parks safer by...**

- Removing encampments
- Supporting more police presence
- Cleaning up needles
- Providing more lighting

**“SEATTLE HAS GREAT PARK INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS FOR MANY NEIGHBORHOODS, SO FOCUS SHOULD BE ON EQUITY. SERVE THOSE COMMUNITIES THAT ARE LACKING PARK ACCESS.”**

**Provide more access by...**

- Ensuring that community center hours work for the public
- Providing year-round bathroom access
- Embracing the spectrum of disability (sensory needs)



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# SOURCES

In the development of this Strategic Plan, SPR staff consulted multiple data sources, including: City of Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development, the U.S. Census and the American Community Survey, the National Recreation and Park Association, Seattle Public Schools, Trust for Public Land, plans and information published by peer cities, City of Seattle and Seattle Parks and Recreation past and current plans, and various studies and scholarly articles, among others. Specific references are listed below.

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- <sup>37</sup> Population data from U.S. Census, projections from Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development, 2019.
- <sup>38</sup> For a record of comments received throughout the Strategic Plan public engagement process, please see Appendix II published on SPR’s website.

# PHOTOS

**Front and Back Cover:** *Yesler Terrace Playground, 2019* • **Page 2:** *Marsh Island, 2019* • **Page 5:** *Parks and Rec Fest at Yesler Terrace Park, 2019* • **Page 7:** *Parks and Rec Fest at Yesler Terrace Park, 2019* • **Page 8:** *Parks and Rec Fest at Green Lake Park, 2019* • **Page 11:** *Seattle Japanese Garden, 2019* • **Page 12:** *Aqua Zumba class at Rainier Beach Community Center, 2019* • **Page 14:** *Denny Blaine Park, 2019* • **Page 16:** *Parks and Rec Fest at Yesler Terrace Park, 2019* • **Page 18:** *Seattle Japanese Garden, 2019* • **Page 20-21:** *Urban Triangle Park, 2019* • **Page 22:** *Lake Washington Shoreline, 2019* • **Page 24:** *Giving Garden at Cascade Playground, 2019* • **Page 26:** *Seattle Japanese Garden, 2019* • **Page 28-29:** *Parks and Rec Fest at Yesler Terrace Park and Green Lake Park, 2019*



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