City Should Reassess Approach to Park Restroom Cleanliness and Availability

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Report Highlights

Background

In this audit, we reviewed the cleanliness and maintenance of City of Seattle restrooms operated by Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR). SPR manages over 489 parks and natural areas, covering about 12% of the city's land area. The audit's scope was to review the cleanliness and maintenance of the 129 restrooms SPR manages across 97 parks in Seattle.

What We Found

We identified issues in the following areas:

- **Cleanliness**: SPR is not meeting its target of cleaning every restroom 2-3 times a day, nor maintaining a consistent level of cleanliness throughout the city. SPR also does not have reliable data to evaluate restroom maintenance performance.
- **Availability**: We found that park restrooms are locked inconsistently and stated restroom hours are not always accurate. SPR is struggling to stay on top of preventive maintenance due to vandalism and staffing constraints. We also share ideas for how SPR could reduce risks in meeting future restroom renovation goals.
- **Additional Observations**: We note additional items concerning SPR restrooms that fell outside the scope of this audit for SPR management to consider.

Recommendations

We make six recommendations to address the issues above (see Appendix B). We recommend that SPR reassess its restroom cleanliness goals and resources, set consistent cleanliness expectations, and improve monitoring and data collection. SPR should also review restroom opening and locking responsibilities to address issues related to restroom availability. Finally, SPR should conduct a staffing analysis to help meet preventive maintenance goals and address risks related to restroom renovation projects.

Department Response

SPR generally concurred with the findings and recommendations (see Appendix A).

WHY WE DID THIS AUDIT

This audit was conducted in response to Seattle Park District Resolution 51 for our office to evaluate if SPR restrooms were cleaned and maintained to ensure they are open, clean, and safe year-round.

HOW WE DID THIS AUDIT

To accomplish the audit's objectives, we:

- Conducted site visits to 90 park restrooms
- Analyzed restroom maintenance work order data
- Interviewed SPR employees involved in restroom cleaning and maintenance
- Analyzed park user survey data
- Analyzed restroom renovation project data
- Researched best practices

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INTRODUCTION

Audit Overview

The Seattle Park District, through Resolution 51, requested that we review Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) restroom cleanliness and maintenance to ensure they are open, clean, and safe year-round.

The scope for this audit included the 129 restrooms located within City of Seattle (City) parks. Unless otherwise noted, the data we analyzed was from June 1, 2023, through June 1, 2024. SPR generally concurred with the report's findings and recommendations (see Appendix A). The audit team for this project included Melissa Alderson, IB Osuntoki, and Sarah Bland, with contributions from Andrew Scoggin. We would like to extend our gratitude to the SPR cleaning crews for accommodating us during our ride-alongs.

Background

Seattle Parks and Recreation manages over 489 parks and natural areas, making up 12% of the city's land area. SPR is responsible for a variety of public assets in addition to parks, including community centers, swimming pools, athletic fields, tennis courts, golf courses, and trails. In this audit, we focused on the 97 parks that have a restroom as part of their amenities.

SPR relies on funding from the Seattle Park District and the City's general fund to support basic park maintenance and fund capital projects. The Park District was approved by voters in 2014 and operates as an independent taxing authority to supplement the budget SPR receives from the City's general fund. Financial planning for the Park District happens in six-year cycles; the current funding cycle, referred to as Cycle 2, is from 2023-2028.

The pandemic, the City's budget, and other challenges have impacted SPR's ability to maintain service levels. In 2020, many park programs were paused or altered to accommodate physical distancing requirements. SPR reported that in 2023 they made progress in returning most programs to their pre-pandemic service levels. However, challenges, such as vandalism, continue to affect restroom operations and maintenance.

In response to the City's projected general fund deficit, the Mayor implemented a partial hiring freeze in 2024. Because of the hiring freeze and to cover unbudgeted costs, SPR did not hire seasonal park maintenance employees in 2024, and left many regular positions vacant. This strained SPR's remaining resources, especially during the summer months of peak park use.

In addition to the above challenges, SPR told us they had difficulty in hiring for certain skilled trade positions that support restroom maintenance work. For example, plumbers are in high demand and the City struggles to offer a competitive wage to attract these skilled workers.

Park restrooms are an important amenity to Seattle residents. In SPR surveys, park users consistently mention restroom cleanliness as an area of top concern. Residents report dissatisfaction with the current condition of park restrooms. In an ongoing community park inspection survey SPR began in September 2023, the public gave restrooms the lowest rating among all 15 park categories listed in the survey, with an average rating of 2.69 (rating 1=lowest/worst, to 5=highest/best). We listed some comments from the survey throughout this report.

PARK RESTROOM CLEANLINESS

Section Summary

Although Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) acknowledges that having clean restrooms is a top concern of the public and a priority for the department, SPR is not meeting its plan of cleaning all restrooms two-to-three times per day. Further, cleaning practices and expectations vary across SPR maintenance districts, which means that restrooms are not being cleaned at the same level of quality. Finally, we identify data limitations issues affecting SPR's ability to accurately measure performance.

SPR is not meeting its plan of cleaning every park restroom 2–3 times per day

SPR reported that all open park restrooms get cleaned at least twice daily. In their 2023 Annual Report released in June 2024, SPR stated that "beginning in March 2023, all open restrooms now get 2-3 cleanings per day year-round." SPR reiterated this standard to us when we asked for information on restroom cleaning expectations. Exhibit 1 shows SPR's daily restroom cleaning plan at the time of our audit.

Exhibit 1: Daily restroom cleaning frequency plan

Peak Season (April-September)	Non-Peak Season
2 wet* cleans 1 dry clean	1 wet clean 1 dry clean

Source: Seattle Parks and Recreation.
*A "wet" clean involves using a pressure washer to clean the floor.

> *"Daily restroom cleanings, with a full spray down and scrub with disinfecting chemicals is necessary. I often find the restrooms unclean, full of garbage, broken, no toilet paper, have squatters inside them on a weekly basis. "*
>
> - Green Lake Park Visitor, October 2023

SPR lacks reliable data to track restroom cleaning frequency. When we asked for data to analyze SPR's plan of cleaning restrooms at least twice a day, SPR said the data they have on actual restroom cleans is not reliable. We discuss this issue on page 7. To determine how often SPR was cleaning restrooms, we completed a ride-along with the cleaning crews in all the park maintenance districts and observed 40 restroom cleanings. We also interviewed crew chiefs in all the maintenance districts. See Appendix C for a map of the park maintenance districts in Seattle.

SPR is not meeting its cleaning frequency plan, which may be unattainable with current resources. Cleaning staff told us they are sometimes unable to visit every restroom in their district before their shift is over, and often do not have time to wet clean restrooms daily. The number of restrooms in each maintenance district varies from 12 to 25, with the average being 18 (excluding the Downtown district, which has just one restroom and is cleaned by the Central West crew). Even using SPR's time allocation estimate of 45 minutes per restroom wet clean, it would take nine hours for one employee to clean 12

restrooms once, and that is not factoring in driving time between parks or breaks and administrative time.

"In the summer the bathrooms need more attention (tp/ cleaning) being that it's the main swimming beach for a majority of the surrounding neighborhoods. The beach people bother the surrounding businesses to use their bathrooms."

- Madison Beach Park Visitor, May 2024

Most maintenance districts have one general laborer assigned to clean restrooms, and they work a morning shift of 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. In the afternoon, maintenance laborers who are assigned to other park maintenance duties will visit restrooms on their route and restock supplies or perform a basic dry clean. However, SPR staff told us that the frequency of these visits and the level of cleaning varied among districts based on their staffing levels.

In addition to the 40-restroom ride-alongs, we visited a judgmental sample of 50 additional restrooms throughout the city to observe their condition at various times of day and days of the week. Overall, the restroom conditions we observed indicate that not all restrooms are getting thoroughly cleaned daily. About half the restrooms (26/50) we visited were visibly dirty, and almost 15% (7/50) lacked supplies (toilet paper and/or hand soap).

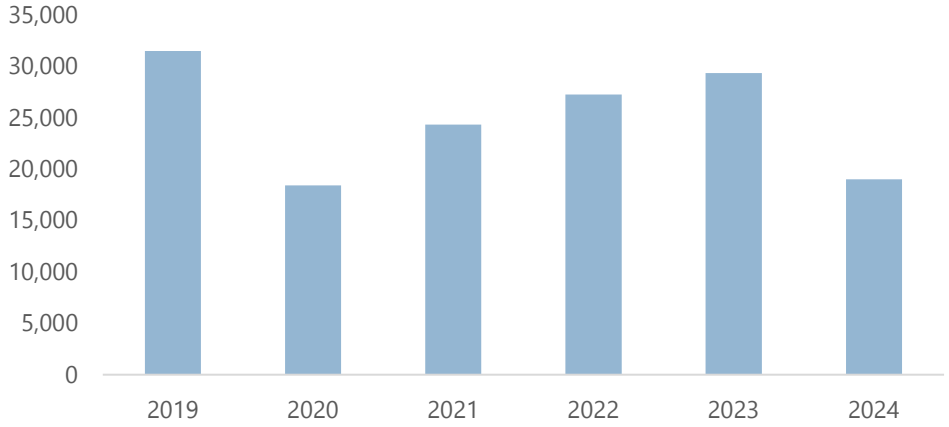
"Bathroom was unusable. Feces were smeared on seat and clothing left on the floor. "

- Madrona Park Visitor, June 2024

In the past, SPR has had a second shift dedicated to cleaning restrooms. SPR also has a longstanding practice of hiring temporary seasonal staff to provide more cleaning support during the peak season (April through September). However, SPR did not hire seasonal staff in 2024 as a budget saving measure. In addition, an SPR division director told us that at the time of our audit the ground maintenance unit had 27 position vacancies that they could not hire for because of pending unbudgeted expenses. SPR crew chiefs told us that these vacancies and the lack of seasonal employees meant below normal staffing for their districts that has affected their cleaning operations. These crew chiefs also cited low morale and burnout as major concerns for their staff.

We analyzed the work hours of the ground maintenance crew, which includes the restroom cleaning staff, to determine the impact of these lower staffing levels. We found that in July 2024, the ground maintenance crew worked 10,000 fewer hours (about 54 FTE) compared to July 2023, and 12,000 fewer hours (about 65 FTE) compared to July 2019 (see Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2: Ground maintenance crew hours for the month of July 2019 – 2024



Due to lower staffing levels, ground maintenance crews worked fewer hours in July 2024 compared to previous years, except 2020

Source: Office of City Auditor analysis of SPR ground maintenance crews' hours for the month of July.

Recommendation 1

Seattle Parks and Recreation should allocate adequate resources to cleaning restrooms to meet its cleaning frequency plan or reassess the plan and communicate any changes to the public.

SPR is not cleaning park restrooms at a consistent level of quality

SPR's restroom cleaning procedures differ from actual practice, resulting in varying cleanliness levels across the city. We reviewed SPR's documented restroom cleaning procedures and compared them to the actual cleanings by crews during our ride-alongs. We observed varying cleaning practices resulting in inconsistent cleanliness outcomes. This means that park users experience different levels of restroom cleanliness throughout the city. It is important for restrooms to be cleaned to a consistent standard, so the public can be assured they are safe and sanitary to use.

Image: SPR cleaning crew sweeping floor.
Source: Office of City Auditor

The most significant difference we observed was the thoroughness of floor cleaning. Most cleaning crews we observed did not pressure wash the restroom

"Bathrooms are disgusting, left uncleaned and constantly closed. "

- Roxhill Playfield Visitor, March 2024

floors. Some crews wet the floor with water, sprayed it with cleaner, and squeegeed it dry. Other crews swept the floor or picked up trash and did not wet clean the floor. This is inconsistent with SPR's expectation that each restroom should be wet cleaned twice daily during peak season. Pressure washing takes more time and a crew might decide to forgo this so that they can clean more restrooms on their route. Crews we observed were also inconsistent in wiping down surfaces with a dry rag after cleaning, cleaning restrooms walls, removing cobwebs, and cleaning drinking fountains.

Management's cleaning expectations and oversight of restroom cleaning varies. In our interviews with crew chiefs, they shared cleaning expectations that were different from SPR's documented procedures and different among each other. For example, crew chiefs had different expectations for wet floor cleaning, ranging from once daily to twice a week. This large variance in expectations likely contributes to the differences we observed among cleaning crews.

"Restrooms are scary - the brick restroom is closed, and the honey buckets are not usable - garbage spilling out – unsanitary. "

- Mount Baker Park Visitor, November 2023

Crew chiefs also described differences in how and how often they oversee employees' work to ensure cleaning expectations are met. Most crew chiefs shared that they try to visit parks in their district periodically to inspect their condition, when they have time. Some crew chiefs rely on other staff to perform ad hoc park inspections. Park user complaints were also relied on to determine if restrooms were meeting expectations. However, SPR does not have a formal monitoring program for routinely and consistently evaluating park restroom cleaning conditions across the city. Given the large variance in the frequency and quality of restroom cleaning, SPR would benefit from communicating consistent expectations and routinely monitoring performance.

Image: SPR cleaning crew pressure washing outside of a restroom.
Source: Office of City Auditor

Recommendation 2

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) should set consistent and attainable park restroom cleaning expectations and communicate them to staff. SPR should also establish a monitoring program to evaluate if restroom cleaning expectations are being met. The monitoring program should be routine and consistent among park maintenance districts.

SPR lacks reliable data to evaluate restroom cleaning performance

"My only complaint about this park is the bathrooms. They have a history of not being in good condition, (vandalized) and honestly need some major cleaning up or updating or something because they just always seem barely acceptable for people to use. As an adult (I) use it but I don't ever want my children using it. "

- Maple Leaf Park Visitor, October 2023

SPR uses an Asset Management Work Order (AMWO) system to track restroom cleaning and maintenance tasks. The ground maintenance crew, which includes the restroom cleaning staff, uses AMWO as their time management system. Crews can post time in AMWO to different parks that they visit as part of their cleaning route, but only at the end of their shift from a desktop computer. Additionally, each AMWO posting requires staff to enter codes specific to the location, task, and route. The SPR dispatch team and crew chiefs can also use AMWO to assign work orders to crews.

SPR's data on actual restroom cleaning is too unreliable to accurately measure performance. We asked SPR for data to support their statement that all restrooms are cleaned two to three times daily. SPR was not able to provide the requested AMWO data because they determined the data was too unreliable to use. SPR explained to us that although AMWO tracks facility and grounds related maintenance work requests, it does not accurately track individual park restroom visits or the completion of assigned daily restroom cleaning routes.

SPR shared several reasons for these data limitations. Until recently, AMWO did not have individual restroom "assets" for employees to charge their time to, meaning SPR did not have data on which restrooms crews visited each day. AMWO now has that feature, though in interviews SPR management stated that not all employees are coding their time at this granular level. This is because the AMWO system can be cumbersome for employees to use, requiring a separate time entry for every restroom visited. SPR told us it is a challenge to have employees accurately enter their time at the end of their shift every day, and consequently were not confident in the accuracy of the data. Without data or evidence on which restrooms were visited each day, SPR cannot accurately analyze their restroom cleaning performance.

SPR management told us they are working to improve AMWO's data entry and other issues. We did not evaluate whether these changes will fully address the data reliability issues because they were being implemented as we were conducting our audit work. There are other potential improvements to AMWO that are beyond SPR's control. For example, SPR is interested in acquiring a mobile interface so that

employees can record their time in the field as they are completing their work. However, SPR told us the AMWO vender has yet to fully develop this capability. SPR should continue to evaluate whether AMWO is going to meet their reporting needs through system and process improvements.

Recommendation 3

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) should collect accurate data to measure and evaluate performance related to restroom cleaning. SPR should re-evaluate if their current asset management work order system will meet these needs.

PARK RESTROOM AVAILABILITY

Section Summary

We found that Seattle Park and Recreation's (SPR's) online dashboard did not accurately reflect restroom hours. SPR's staffing and budget challenges are contributing to inconsistency and confusion regarding the locking of park restrooms. Vandalism and staffing limitations are also causing SPR crews to spend more time responding to demand work instead of preventive maintenance. This delays important maintenance work that keeps restrooms in good working order and open for public use. Finally, we discuss risks SPR is facing in completing restroom renovations and recommend mitigation strategies.

Posted restroom availability is unreliable

"...restrooms are rarely open..."

- Rogers Playfield Visitor March 2024

SPR's online restroom dashboard displays restroom availability but is not always accurate. SPR provides a public dashboard on their website to assist the public in locating open restrooms and drinking fountains in Seattle parks. During our visits to a sample of 50 park restrooms, five restrooms were closed though the dashboard said they were open. Of these five, two restrooms did not have signage to indicate the reason for the closure. SPR validates the dashboard once a week, but more frequent updates could improve the accuracy of restroom availability status. SPR could also add language about the unreliability of the dashboard to their website.

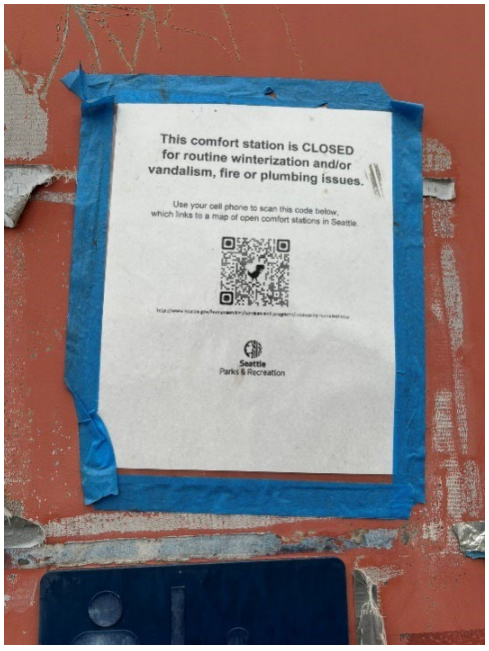


Image: Closure signage on a park restroom door.
Source: Office of City Auditor

Restrooms are locked inconsistently and not according to plan

> *"Please be sure to lock the bathroom at night. When it is left unlocked, that is when people go in there and spray paint graffiti everywhere."*
>
> - Greenwood Park Visitor, November 2023

There is confusion as to who is responsible for locking restrooms and which restrooms should be locked. SPR has a practice of locking some restrooms at night to discourage inappropriate use and vandalism. During our interviews, we asked about restroom locking and heard a variety of answers, indicating confusion among employees. For example, some employees thought the SPR Park Rangers were supposed to be locking restrooms, which SPR management later confirmed is not the case. Other employees thought SPR hired a private security company to do this work; this is partially true, as SPR uses a company to lock certain restrooms. Other employees did not know who performed the locking or which restrooms in their district should be locked at night.

Some restrooms that are supposed to be locked are not being locked. We heard from SPR crew chiefs and cleaning crews that some restrooms in their district should be locked at night, but this is not consistently occurring. SPR explained that the locking of restrooms has been complicated this year by staffing shortages, a change in staffing shifts, poor performance from their private security contractor, and issues with remote locks.

SPR has been piloting remote locks on some new restrooms to reduce the amount of staff time it takes to manually lock them. SPR management also expressed concern for the safety of their employees having to visit restrooms at night in the dark alone, and remote locks would address this issue. However, these remote locks have not always worked as intended, and there have been issues with the technology and people intentionally damaging them. SPR is evaluating the use of remote locks to address these issues.

Image: Broken remote lock at Alki restroom.
Source: Office of City Auditor

Restroom locking should be intentional, as there are consequences to restricting restroom access. Keeping restrooms open 24/7 can provide a vital service to the public; however, increased use can further burden cleaning and maintenance crews that are already struggling to keep restrooms in good condition. SPR told us that even when restrooms are left open overnight, they still consider them closed after the park they are located within closes, typically between 10 and 11:30 p.m. However, staff told us that restrooms that are unlocked are more likely to be vandalized or used for unintended purposes.

Inaccurately posted hours and inconsistent locking practices can lead to confusion and frustration among park users that are expecting a certain level of restroom availability.

Recommendation 4:

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) should review park restroom hours and determine who is responsible for opening and locking them. SPR should also be strategic and intentional when deciding which restrooms should be locked and when. SPR should then communicate their restroom locking plan to staff.

SPR is not meeting its preventive maintenance goal

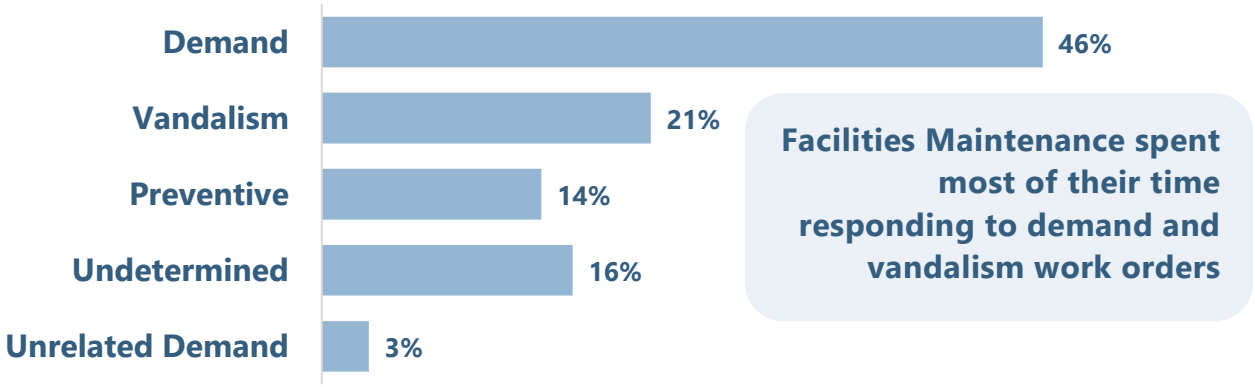
> *"...Restrooms are disgusting, from floor to ceiling: years' worth (of) spiderwebs, un properly cleaned (if at all) sinks, toilets, walls, floors ext. Graffiti everywhere, structures themselves not maintained or inspected, there is currently bad rot on one bathroom in particular... "*
>
> - Lincoln Park Visitor, November 2023

SPR identified preventive maintenance labor hours as a performance metric. The Facilities Maintenance division handles repair and maintenance on SPR assets that do not rise to the level of capital projects. SPR's in-house facility maintenance shops include plumbing, painting, carpentry, metal fabrication, electrical services, and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC). SPR divides maintenance projects into two main categories: 1) demand maintenance (such as responding to broken door handles, and unclogging toilets) and 2) preventive maintenance (such as roof inspections, and weatherizing restrooms to ensure year-round availability).

As part of the Park District Cycle 2 reporting plan, SPR identified the performance metric of 60% preventive maintenance to 40% demand labor hours. It is a best practice to spend more time on preventive maintenance, because it can decrease future repair costs and keep assets operating in good condition longer. For reference, industry standards for preventive maintenance on physical assets ranges from 70% to 80%. According to studies identified by the Federal Energy Management Program, preventive maintenance can lead to an estimated 12% to 18% cost savings over a reactive maintenance program.

We analyzed SPR Facilities Maintenance labor hours spent on restrooms and found that SPR did not meet their 60% preventive maintenance goal. Exhibit 3 shows that 21% of labor hours were spent in response to vandalism. About 67% (46% + 21%) of labor hours were spent on demand maintenance (demand + vandalism) for restrooms and 14% on preventive maintenance. We found that 20 restrooms were responsible for about 60% of all SPR facilities shops' labor hours.

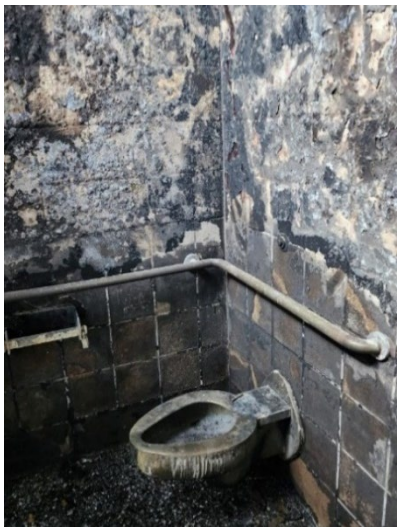
Exhibit 3: Seattle Parks and Recreation Facilities Maintenance Labor Hours, June 1, 2023, through June 1, 2024

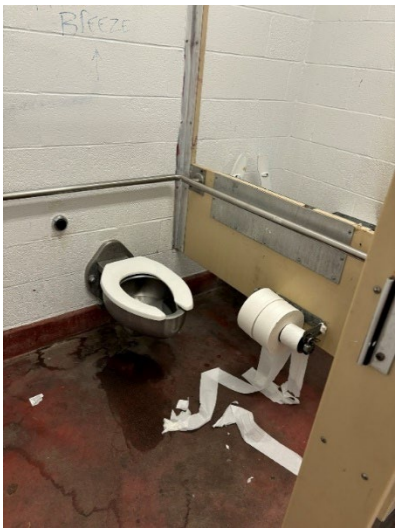


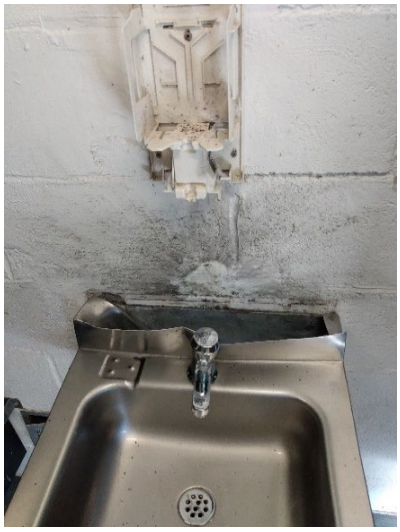
Source: Office of City Auditor analysis of SPR Facilities Maintenance Division labor hours from SPR's Asset Management Work Order (AMWO) system. The shops included in this analysis are plumbing, paint, carpentry, metal, and electric.

SPR staff told us they were not meeting their preventive maintenance goal because of increases in demand work orders, many of which are in response to vandalism. For example, employees identified soap dispensers as one of the most frequently vandalized items in park restrooms. Other common forms of vandalism included the intentional clogging of toilets, graffiti, and arson.

Responding to demand work orders means less time is spent on preventive maintenance, including the weatherization of restrooms. SPR staff stated that the increase in demand work orders makes it challenging to meet their goal of weatherizing 10 restrooms annually during the Park District Cycle 2 funding period. The weatherization process involves insulating restrooms so that the pipes do not freeze during the winter. SPR set this goal to have more park restrooms open year-round.







Images clockwise from top left:
A restroom toilet damaged by fire, graffiti covering the wall of a restroom, a restroom stall with a missing door, and two images of sinks with broken soap dispensers.
Source: Seattle Parks and Recreation and Office of City Auditor

SPR may not have the resources to keep up with restroom preventive maintenance

According to SPR staff, its Facilities Maintenance shops are understaffed. SPR experienced challenges in filling their skilled trade positions, partly because of the City's hiring freeze and partly because the City's pay rates for these positions was not competitive to the private sector. To address the increase in graffiti and vandalism, SPR hired five additional Facilities Maintenance staff in 2023. However, SPR staff told us that the increase in demand work has outpaced their current capacity to respond to work orders while also performing sufficient preventive maintenance.

SPR needs to analyze their current maintenance resources against the demand for Facilities Maintenance work to facilitate an accurate forecast of shops' resource needs. Conducting a resource and staffing analysis would help SPR identify potential strategies to address any gaps and meet its preventive maintenance performance metrics. The

Washington State Office of Financial Management has guidance on analyzing staffing needs and identifying appropriate strategies that SPR could use to begin this work.

Recommendation 5:

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) should conduct a resource and staffing analysis to determine the appropriate amount of resources required for adequate restroom preventive maintenance. SPR should report the results of this analysis to the Park District Board.

SPR faces challenges in meeting its goal for restroom renovation projects

SPR has a goal of renovating 27 restrooms during the Park District Cycle 2 funding period (2023-2028). SPR identified many restrooms that need renovation, for such things as new windows, plumbing fixtures, roofs, and improving accessibility. The Park District Cycle 2 funding increased the resources available to renovate restrooms. In 2023, SPR had six restroom renovation projects that reached the construction phase. SPR aims to complete a total of 27 restroom renovations by the end of Cycle 2 (2028), at a rate of about 4 to 5 projects per year.

SPR has identified and addressed some risks to its restroom renovation projects, but more remain. Some consistent risks identified by SPR across capital projects are inflation, cost escalation, and high-cost public works contract bids. To address these risks, SPR said they hold management funding reserves to address unforeseen work and have increased their project-level contingency reserves to address predictable cost increases and change orders during construction. SPR also told us that they have implemented a review process to anticipate and track risks to project delivery.

Risk assessment is an important component of the internal control system used by management to help them achieve their objectives and run operations efficiently and effectively. Mitigating risks can involve avoiding the risk, reducing the risk, sharing/transferring the risk, and accepting the risk. We identified risks to SPR restroom renovation projects and offer ideas for how to respond to them.

SPR has not conducted condition assessments of restroom facilities at regular intervals to inform their restroom capital plan. Facilities condition assessment is a systematic and standardized method of inspecting building systems and features by observing the conditions and identifying deficiencies. Facilities condition assessment is usually completed by architects and other professionals and involves assessing the facilities for critical health and safety, environmental degradation, or other similar conditions that need to be addressed in

the short and long term. The assessments can help inform asset management and capital plans, including budgets for facilities.

Outdated assessments and plans mean that the prioritization of restroom renovation projects is not informed by the latest conditions and specific maintenance needs. The last assessments of park restrooms were completed between 2015 and 2017, and the results were used to develop the 2018 restroom capital plan, which SPR told us is still being used to prioritize restrooms for renovation. Before that, the last restroom plan was produced in 2008, and previously in 2005. The U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service conduct comprehensive condition assessments of park assets, including restrooms, on a 5-year cycle. Additionally, the U.S. Government Accountability Office's Leading Practices in Capital Decision-Making guide proposes that capital plans should cover a period of 5, 6, or 10 years and should be updated either annually or biennially.

Regular assessments of park restrooms are also important because SPR has determined that age is not a good predictor of restrooms' conditions because, after 20 years, factors such as design, use, and maintenance play a more important role in facility conditions. SPR estimated that Cycle 2 funding reduced its average renewal cycle for current park restrooms from 42 years to 34 years. SPR identified 30 years as the industry standard life cycle for restrooms.

SPR could align their restroom condition assessments and plan with the six-year funding cycle of the Park District to ensure it is periodic and efficient for financial planning.

SPR has tried to package projects together in one bid in an attempt to save time and money. SPR uses the public works procurement process for restroom renovation projects. The Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) ensures that all City public works projects comply with the state requirements in RCW 39.04. The traditional model for public works is the Design-Bid-Build (DBB) process involves planning and identifying project specifications during the design phase, then conducting a bidding phase in which the lowest bid usually wins, and concluding with the building phase with the contractor performing the work. In addition to DBB, there are three alternative models: 1) Job Order, 2) General Contractor/Construction Manager, and 3) Design-Build that can be used for public works procurement as prescribed in RCW 39.10.

As part of the Park District Cycle 2 funding plan, SPR indicated that they will prioritize opportunities to bundle restroom renovation projects into one bidding package to increase time efficiencies, reduce

cost, and lessen the impact on the community through site closures. Although SPR tried to package five restroom renovation projects through the Design-Build (DB) alternative project delivery model, the application for DB was rejected by FAS because restroom renovations did not meet the requirements of RCW 39.10.300. DB is for highly specialized projects that can realize greater innovation or efficiencies between the designer and the builder. However, FAS staff told us that SPR can still package multiple restroom projects using the traditional DBB model. For example, Seattle Public Utilities uses the DBB packaging model for their sewage replacement project of multiple sewage lines throughout the city.

In addition, packaging of restroom renovations could streamline project and contract management of restroom renovation projects and increase the competitiveness of bidding. SPR staff told us that there are fewer contractors interested in individual restroom renovation projects because they have lower profit margins.

Restroom vandalism is leading to unplanned capital projects that strains SPR's limited budget. SPR staff told us that restrooms have experienced severe vandalism and arson in recent years. For example, in their 2023 Annual Report, SPR reported that Seattle saw a 52% growth in reported graffiti during the pandemic. Sometimes, the vandalism is so severe that it damages the restroom to the point that the building needs to be completely renovated or replaced.

Image: Burned toilet at Highland Park restroom.
Source: Seattle Parks and Recreation

For example, the significant fire damage in Lower Woodland Park and Bradner Gardens Park in 2020 resulted in both restrooms being replaced. These projects were not on the 2018 priority list for restroom renovation but were added after the fires occurred. At the time of this audit, the two restrooms were in the construction phase.

The increase in vandalism to restrooms is changing how SPR is prioritizing projects and is stressing SPR's capital budget. SPR estimates the Lower Woodland Park and Bradner Gardens Park restroom replacements will cost $2.5 million and $1.02 million respectively. The budget for both replacement projects comprises

almost a year of SPR's total restroom renovation budget (about $3.7 million annually). In response to the increase in major restroom vandalism and arson, in 2023 SPR began setting aside $500,000 annually for unexpected capital projects.

Image: Burned toilet at Leschi Park restroom.
Source: Seattle Parks and Recreation

The U.S. Government Accountability Office's Leading Practices in Capital Decision-Making guide identified that an important practice is for agencies to develop long-term capital plans that document specific planned projects and that changes to those plans should be driven by strategic decisions. SPR can anticipate that future unplanned projects will arise and should determine how to proactively plan for them.

Recommendation 6:

Seattle Parks and Recreation should develop and implement a systematic approach to manage risks to restroom renovation projects. This approach should include identifying, analyzing, and responding to risks by conducting periodic assessments of restrooms, reassessing budget allocation methodology for unplanned capital projects, and exploring packaging restroom projects during the planning process.

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

Section Summary

This section includes things we observed during our audit work that were beyond scope. However, we include them as informational items for Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) management to review and consider. We discuss the newly ramped up Park Ranger program, the tracking of existing porta-potties, employee morale concerns, and restroom design considerations.

Park Ranger program could benefit from improved communication and future evaluation

SPR's Park Ranger program is rapidly evolving and expanding from a focus on downtown to operating citywide. Park Rangers are responsible for monitoring park areas, including restrooms, to promote safety and voluntary compliance of park rules. They also support cleaning crews through their presence and assistance in ensuring that restrooms are used for intended purposes. However, SPR staff expressed differing views about Park Rangers' roles and responsibilities during our interviews. For example, as we discussed on page 10, there is confusion among some employees about Park Rangers' role in locking restrooms. SPR management could improve their communication about the Park Ranger program across their various divisions so that managers and frontline employees can better understand the program, how it supports their work, and the program's limitations.

The Park Ranger program could also benefit from an evaluation to help document current activities and impacts, identify elements of the program that are working well and those that are not, build credibility and support for effective strategies, and identify some key performance indicators that the program can track. Evaluation can help improve practices such as deployment strategy and a coverage plan. SPR staff acknowledged that the program has the potential to be impactful but expressed mixed reactions about the perceived effectiveness of the current program strategy. We encourage SPR management to evaluate the program so that they can gain insights and identify potential improvements in how they manage, develop, communicate, and implement the Park Ranger program.

SPR lacks a database of all porta-potties in parks

SPR uses porta-potties at high-use parks, during major events, and for long-term closure of restrooms. SPR uses a City blanket contract to obtain porta-potties and does not contract directly with porta-potty vendors. At the time of our audit, SPR did not maintain a comprehensive list of parks where porta-potties are located or other important information such as their planned duration of deployment in a park. The unavailability of comprehensive information on porta-potties in parks means SPR might not be able to easily monitor the

performance of vendors or communicate to the public on where to find a porta-potty. It would be beneficial to SPR management and to the public for SPR to maintain thorough details on their use of porta-potties in parks.

SPR managers are concerned about employee morale and safety

SPR managers identified employee morale and safety as two of their highest concerns. They told us that the increased workload for staff, the complexity of problems they encounter, and the perception of the City's inaction to vandalism, are resulting in low morale and burnout. SPR's decision not to hire seasonal employees during the 2024 peak season put even more work and pressure on the cleaning crews.

> *"My biggest concern is the crew's morale because they are encountering the same problems of misuse of bathrooms every day and there is inaction to the repeated misuse."*
>
> - SPR Crew Chief

Managers also said that efforts to keep restrooms open might worsen their condition. For example, they said that in previous years, if they noticed severe and repeated vandalism at the same location and suspected that it was caused by the same individual, they could get approval to close the restroom for a week to discourage the vandalism. Due to pressure from the public and management to keep restrooms open, those requests are no longer being made.

SPR crew chiefs worry about having only one staff assigned to a restroom cleaning route, especially during winter months when it gets dark earlier in the day. During our interviews with the ground maintenance crew, some shared safety concerns, such as feeling intimidated or being verbally and sometimes physically assaulted, while performing their duties.

Restroom design impacts maintenance and safety

Several of SPR's new restrooms are designed as single occupancy, all gender restrooms for inclusivity and privacy. However, SPR staff expressed concerns about the level of vandalism and damage to these restrooms' equipment due to their design.

"Single stall restrooms are more likely to be damaged because someone can go into the restroom, lock it, and use it as an apartment and stay in there as long as they want. "

- SPR Manager

Image: Single occupancy restrooms at Gas Works Park.
Source: Office of City Auditor

"This is one of my kids' very favorite parks in Seattle, but the bathrooms are awful! It feels like a dungeon. And there's no trash can for feminine hygiene waste which is awkward, walking out with it in hand and kids all around. "

- Meridian Park Visitor, October 2023

We observed poor and inadequate lighting in some of the restrooms we visited. Lighting is an important feature that ensures visibility and promotes safety. Adequate lighting is a complementary strategy to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) approaches that can deter criminal behavior, improve safety, and enhance cleaning. SPR staff also identified poor ventilation as a design issue.

Finally, we noticed during our site visits that most restrooms have trash cans outside of the restrooms but none inside them for disposal of things like sanitary products and diapers. During one of our site visits, we observed a plumber trying to unclog a toilet that was clogged by tampons. We often observed trash on restroom floors that may have been placed in a trash can if it were located in the restroom. SPR could consider having more trash cans available inside park restrooms as an amenity to park users.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The Seattle Park District, through Resolution 51, requested that we review Seattle Park and Recreation (SPR) restroom cleanliness and maintenance to ensure they are open, clean, and safe year-round.

Scope

The scope for this audit included the 129 restrooms located within City of Seattle parks. Unless otherwise noted, the data we analyzed was from June 1, 2023, through June 1, 2024.

Methodology

To accomplish the audit's objectives, we performed the following:

- Conducted site visits between July and September 2024 to 90 park restrooms to observe their condition
- Conducted a ride-along with SPR cleaning crews for each of the seven park maintenance districts
- Interviewed the crew chiefs for each of the seven park maintenance districts
- Interviewed SPR employees responsible for SPR capital projects and facilities maintenance
- Interviewed employees from the Department of Finance and Administrative Services and the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections
- Interviewed and attended a ride along with Park Rangers
- Interviewed employees from the Seattle Parks Foundation
- Analyzed restroom maintenance work orders to determine the number of hours spent by different SPR maintenance shops on maintenance tasks
- Analyzed park user survey data from the Community Park Inspection Survey from September 23, 2023, to June 1, 2024
- Analyzed SPR maintenance hours for the months of May, June, and July, from 2019 to 2024
- Analyzed SPR restroom cleaning plan data
- Analyzed SPR restroom renovation project data
- Researched best practices

We assessed the reliability of the ground maintenance hours, facilities maintenance shops, and renovation datasets that SPR provided to us and concluded that the data was sufficient and appropriate for this audit. We did not use the cleaning data from SPR's Asset Management Work Order (AMWO) system, which we concluded is unreliable for this audit.

We used a judgmental method to determine the 50 restrooms we visited independently. The 40 restrooms we visited during our ride-along were determined by the cleaning crew in each district. Although we visited 70% of the restrooms that SPR manages, the results of our audit test work cannot be projected to all park restrooms because our sample size was not random. We designed our independent visits to ensure we visited different types of parks and that our visits were evenly distributed throughout SPR maintenance districts.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

APPENDIX A

Department Response

Seattle
Parks & Recreation

Memo

Date: November 19, 2024
To: City Auditor David Jones and the Office of City Auditor
From: Superintendent Anthony-Paul (AP) Diaz, Esq., Seattle Parks and Recreation
Subject: SPR's Response to the Park Restrooms Audit

Thank you for the opportunity to work together to improve park restrooms for Seattle residents. We commend your commitment to seeing the work up close and in person, observing parks maintenance staff across all our districts, and interviewing frontline workers and management from a variety of trades and roles. Please find attached to this letter our point-by-point response to your findings and our proposed implementation plan.

Additionally, we wanted to take this opportunity to provide some broader context about our work.

We take our role in providing park restrooms seriously. As you noted, throughout this audit you heard from many staff that keeping restrooms clean and open is "top of mind" for the Department. This commitment is evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of our 129 park restrooms are open according to plan, cleaned regularly, and ready for use by the public. Even during the very early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, with severe resource constraints and great confusion, Seattle never closed its park restrooms to the public—one of the only US cities to never do so, according to the City Parks Alliance.

Next, our network of park restrooms has been designed with recreational users in mind, however, we also understand that because of a documented shortage of public restrooms in Seattle, our restrooms see use beyond standard park users (e.g. people experiencing homelessness, bus and delivery drivers etc.) and sometimes critical those who need them. Additional challenges in the provision of public restrooms center around vandalism, criminal uses of public spaces, fire risks and increased wear and tear.

As such, when we had the opportunity to increase investment in our services through Cycle 2 of the Park District, we prioritized restroom access in numerous ways as described below.

A significant portion of this audit focuses on the quantity and quality of daily cleaning, and consistency of public access to restrooms. You can see in our implementation plan that we are taking your recommendations for improvement seriously—proposing to clarify and strengthen citywide cleaning protocols, and developing cleaning plans that adjust based on resources available, for example. However, it is important to note that the experience of restrooms reported by park users is influenced by a variety of factors, including the age of our facilities and materials used as well as the impacts of the mental health, addiction, and homelessness crises.

This is a consistent theme I dealt with firsthand in my time managing the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, and a consistent issue affecting public park agencies through my affiliation as a board member of the National Recreation and Parks Association. Therefore, while no jurisdiction has perfected the provision of public restrooms and while we cannot expect hardworking park maintenance laborers to solve these complex issues with a mop or a pressure washer, we are implementing a variety of strategies to improve the user experience:

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- The age of our facilities means that some of our restrooms won't look or feel clean even with significant amounts of daily maintenance. To remedy this, SPR has committed to **major renovations or rebuilds to 27 aging restrooms** between 2023 and 2028—with 6 sites completed so far in 2024 (Bradner Gardens, Bitter Lake Playfield, Gas Works Park, Green Lake Park, Interbay Stadium, Pathways Park), and many others currently in construction or in various stages of planning and design.
- SPR has been **updating design standards for new restrooms**, using vandalism- and arson-resistant materials—a process we will formalize as part of our implementation plan in response to this audit since unfortunately, our restrooms are increasingly vandalized, or are the site of encampments that result in facility damage. Some of these are small-scale incidents (a broken soap dispenser, a wall covered in graffiti), while others are significantly more impactful (damaged plumbing, stolen copper wires, arson that destroys a restroom completely). To reduce the impact of vandalism on our restroom operations.
- Many of our facilities were not built for year-round use, with lofty spaces or open gates that would cause pipes to freeze if operated in the winter. Based on public input, SPR is in the midst of **weathering 60 restrooms by 2028**, so that all 129 restrooms can operate year-round—with 10 sites weatherized so far (David Rogers Park, Delridge Community Center, E.C. Hughes Playground, Lakewood Playground, Lincoln Park at Coleman Pool, Madrona Park, Magnolia Park, Magnuson Park, Othello Playground, and Westcrest Park), and 10 more planned for this winter.

We hope your Office, elected officials, and the public will review the results of this audit with some key context in mind—namely **Park District investments are ramping up and staffing levels were lower than anticipated during Summer 2024**. After filling regular positions, SPR generally hires seasonal employees to supplement staffing for the summer, but did not do so in 2024 to absorb substantial unbudgeted costs. Additionally, we delayed hiring some regular grounds maintenance positions while we deliberated on approaches to address projected General Fund gaps in 2025 and 2026. In discussion with SDHR, it was determined that hiring temporary employees in this time period was not in alignment with personnel rules related to temporary employment. Collectively, these unique circumstances meant that there were significantly fewer laborers working on restrooms during the period of the audit than planned. As noted in our implementation plan, we are launching a hiring process to bring more laborer positions onboard in early 2025, which will allow for an increased cleaning in restrooms and other assets.

We are committed to improving the public experience of our restrooms through the investments above and by implementing or exploring many of your recommendations, described in more detail in our implementation plan and thank you for the opportunity to provide additional context as noted above.

Sincerely,

Superintendent Anthony-Paul (AP) Diaz, Esq.

APPENDIX B

List of Recommendations and Department Response

Recommendation 1:

Seattle Parks and Recreation should allocate adequate resources to cleaning restrooms to meet its cleaning frequency plan or reassess the plan and communicate any changes to the public.

Department Concurrence: SPR generally concurs with this recommendation.
Estimated Date of Completion (Qtr./Yr.): Q3 2025
Department Response: SPR aims to keep our restrooms clean and usable for the public. Our cleaning plan of 2-3 times per day in peak season is an internal goal, based on standard staffing levels. As noted in the audit report and discussed in our response letter, the timing of this audit coincided with a period of low staffing for our grounds maintenance workforce, as SPR held many vacant positions and did not hire seasonal laborers due to budget and HR policy constraints, most notably a citywide hiring freeze in 2024 due to the General Fund deficit. With that said, we intend to implement the following activities:

- Develop a by-restroom cleaning plan setting number and type of cleanings, by which staff, taking resources and seasonality and staffing level into account, by end of Q2 2025. Adjust and communicate based on major staffing fluctuations.
- Hire additional grounds maintenance positions to increase staffing available for restroom cleaning by Q3 2025.

Recommendation 2:

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) should set consistent and attainable park restroom cleaning expectations and communicate them to staff. SPR should also establish a monitoring program to evaluate if restroom cleaning expectations are being met. The monitoring program should be routine and consistent among park maintenance districts.

Department Concurrence: SPR generally concurs with this recommendation.
Estimated Date of Completion (Qtr./Yr.): Generally, Q3 2025, except as noted below.
Department Response: Please note that in some cases, due to a facility's age and materials, even after a thorough cleaning it may still look or feel unpleasant to some visitors, and this is not a fault of the quality or consistency of daily cleaning. In these cases, major renovation may be appropriate, and as noted in the audit, SPR is in the midst of restroom renovations across the city. While specific cleaning tasks may vary based on facility age, materials, and condition, we are confident that a consistent task conducted in regular cleaning is sanitization. With that said, we intend to implement the following activities to ensure consistent cleaning standards:

- Revamp written procedures for cleaning and provide training by Q3 2025 (annually thereafter).
- Set expectations for regular supervisory monitoring prior to Q3 2025, as part of our broader park inspection program that includes (i) district supervisor inspection, (ii) volunteer inspections, and (iii) park user surveys.
- Implement consistent capacity for hot pressure washing across all maintenance districts within 3 months of delivery of outfitted trucks from FAS.

Recommendation 3:

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) should collect accurate data to measure and evaluate performance related to restroom cleaning. SPR should re-evaluate if their current asset management work order system will meet these needs.

Department Concurrence: SPR generally concurs with the finding that we should set goals for our restrooms and track data to measure progress but will pursue a different approach.
Estimated Date of Completion (Qtr./Yr.): Pilot in Q1-3 2025, finalize by end of Q4 2025.
Department Response: SPR's asset management and work order system (AMWO) tracks work performed on a variety of our assets and serves us well by identifying work needing to be done, triaging and assigning that work, and tracking its completion. The audit report correctly notes that the system does not function well to track specific hours that maintenance staff clean restrooms on a daily basis. It is possible that a future mobile platform (in development by the AMWO vendor) would better function to capture number of cleanings per day, but it is not clear at this time when this platform would be available. Under the current system, attempting to track specific hours cleaning restrooms or numbers of visits to restrooms (or any specific asset in a park full of important assets) would be extremely cumbersome, pulling staff time away from actual cleaning work to make increasingly detailed entries into a computer system. Instead, we will explore setting a new goal not based on activity metrics (such as number of cleaning hours or number of visits), but rather based on the outcome of user experience through our park inspection program. Specifically, we will:

- Through our park inspection programs (which use ongoing internal and public feedback to rate cleanliness of park features), develop a restroom-specific rating goal and regularly review with the relevant work units.

Recommendation 4:

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) should review park restroom hours and determine who is responsible for opening and locking them. SPR should also be strategic and intentional when deciding which restrooms should be locked and when. SPR should then communicate their restroom locking plan to staff.

Department Concurrence: SPR generally concurs with this recommendation.
Estimated Date of Completion (Qtr./Yr.): Q3 2025.
Department Response: SPR has never been budgeted or staffed to lock all restrooms, and until recent years generally did not lock restrooms at night. In recent years, we have locked a limited number of restrooms at night, either through our own staff or contracted security, based on safety and other parameters. We agree that given the high rates of vandalism that park facilities are experiencing, there is value in reviewing our approach to locking restrooms at night. Therefore, we will:

- Develop written guidelines for prioritizing which restrooms are locked/unlocked, by whom, including criteria for why a restroom would be locked or not, given resources available. We will develop these guidelines by Q2 2025 and share with staff by Q3 2025.
- Continue to publish an online restroom dashboard to inform the public about open restroom and longer closures (vandalism, seasonal closures, etc.).

Recommendation 5:

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) should conduct a resource and staffing analysis to determine the appropriate amount of resources required for adequate restroom preventive maintenance. SPR should report the results of this analysis to the Park District Board.

Department Concurrence: SPR concurs with the finding that we have not reached our existing goal of 60% preventive maintenance to 40% demand maintenance but will pursue a different approach forward.
Estimated Date of Completion (Qtr./Yr.): Q3 2026
Department Response: Across all our assets, SPR strives to perform regular preventive maintenance (PM) to keep systems in good working order. Since 2016, we have had a goal of spending 60% of our facility maintenance staff time on PM, and 40% on demand maintenance. However, this goal was set not on specific data, but rather as an aspirational goal aligned with our PM philosophy.

The audit report correctly notes that in recent years, we have not met this goal—due to a dramatic increase in vandalism requiring significantly more demand maintenance paired with the difficulty in hiring and retaining the skilled tradespeople that perform facility maintenance. In response to vandalism, as we note elsewhere in this audit response, we are continually considering how restroom design and materials can be less vulnerable to vandalism. Regarding vacancies in our skilled trades positions, in late 2023 and 2024 certain of these positions (including plumbers) received an annual wage increase with a market rate adjustment, which we believe is much warranted and will be helpful in recruiting and retaining these positions in the future. Rather than perform a staffing analysis against an aspirational goal, we will:

- Develop clear Operations & Maintenance (O&M) standards for PM related to park restrooms by the end of Q3 2025.
- Develop and pilot a new, data-informed PM goal, likely related to measuring our adherence to the above O&M standards, by Q3 2026.
- Hire additional plumbers into existing vacant positions to increase PM on restroom, in line with the above O&M standards, by Q3 2025.

Recommendation 6:

Seattle Parks and Recreation should develop and implement a systematic approach to manage risks to restroom renovation projects. This approach should include identifying, analyzing, and responding to risks by conducting periodic assessments of restrooms, reassessing budget allocation methodology for unplanned capital projects, and exploring packaging restroom projects during the planning process.

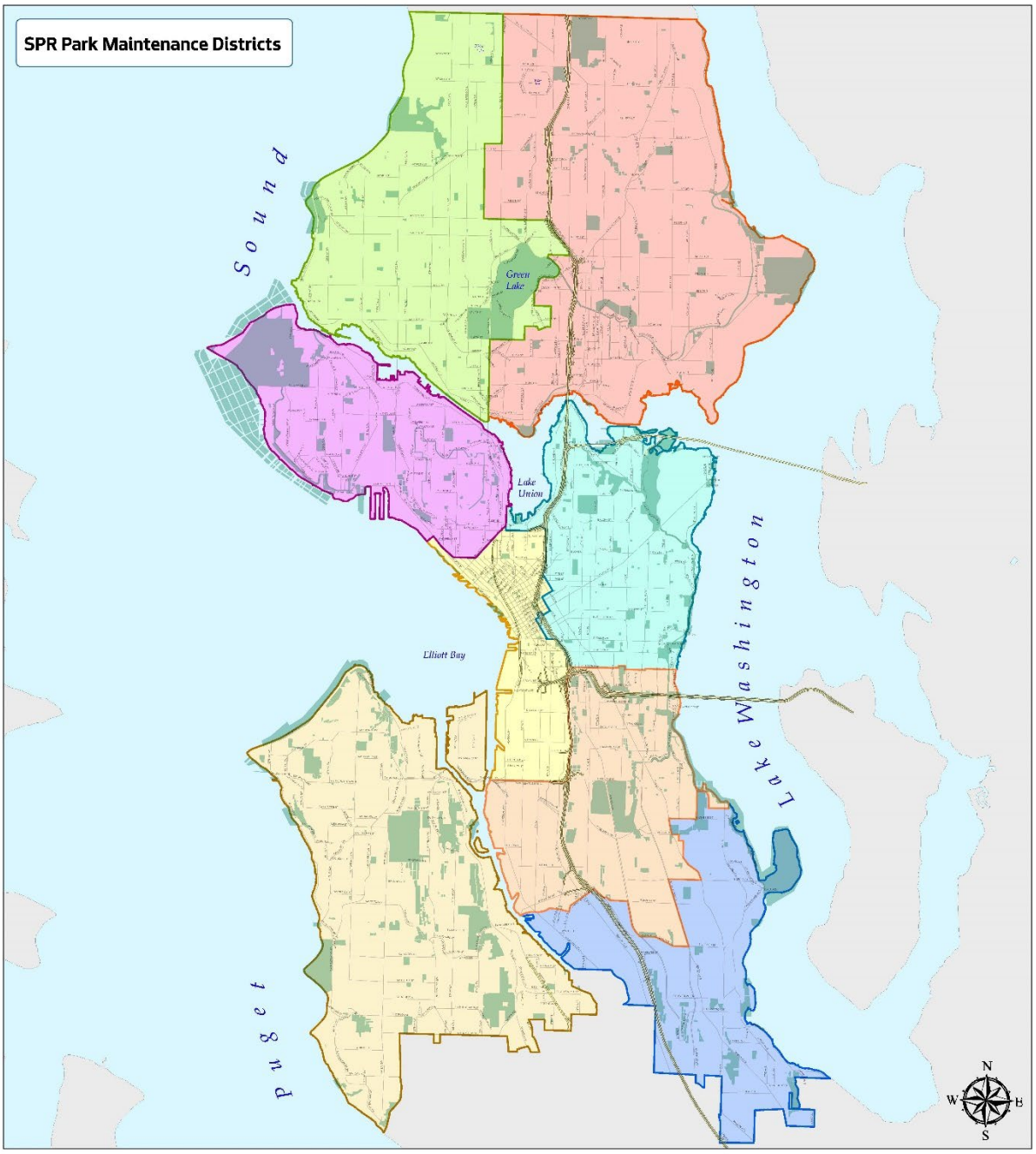
Department Concurrence: SPR generally concurs with this recommendation.
Estimated Date of Completion (Qtr./Yr.): Q2 2026
Department Response: Many sources of resident complaints regarding the look and smell of restrooms, as well as many of the risk factors for arson and vandalism, can only be ameliorated through renovation of our oldest facilities. As part of the Cycle 2 Metropolitan Park District Fund financial plan, SPR has committed to major renovations or rebuilds of 27 aging restrooms by 2028; as of the release of this audit, we have completed renovation of 6. We believe that many of the Auditor's suggestions are already in process, but we appreciate the opportunity to put them into practice more formally, as we continue to revise systems and explore methods to lower risks. Specifically, we will:

- Mitigate risk by aligning condition assessments with 6-year Park District planning cycles, and doing annual updates to include emergent work, with the first assessments beginning in 2025.
- Continue planning to package multiple restrooms into one bid package (beginning with a package of 5 restroom projects anticipated to go to bid by late 2025 or early 2026), or to bundle various assets at a single site to achieve efficiencies (beginning with 4 sites where we will incorporate restroom renovation into other site work, anticipated to go to bid by early 2026).

Continue to plan annually for risks of arson and vandalism by setting aside reserve funds (as approved in Cycle 2 of the Park District). We will also update park restroom design standards to incorporate lessons learned and best practices around durability, vandalism resistance, and maintenance by Q4 2025. We will also continue to explore innovative approaches and new technologies, such as new approaches to self-cleaning toilets, and testing fire-retardant materials.

APPENDIX C

Map of Seattle Parks and Recreation Maintenance Districts



Maintenance District	Manager	Manager Telephone	Crew Chief	Crew Chief Telephone
Downtown	Donna Waters	(206) 256-6275	Terence Masterjohn	(206) 684-7258
South Central	Donna Waters	(206) 256-6275	*Vacant*	(206) 419-6260
South East	Donna Waters	(206) 256-6275	Vera McDaniel	(206) 386-1897
South West	Donna Waters	(206) 256-6275	Carol Baker	(206) 684-7457
Central East	*Vacant*	(206) 423-5794	Jordan Merriam	(206) 684-4750
Central West	*Vacant*	(206) 423-5794	Brian Te	(206) 386-4280
North East	*Vacant*	(206) 423-5794	Rodney Nealer	(206) 684-4955
North West	*Vacant*	(206) 423-5794	Colleen Hackett	(206) 684-4958

Legend

- Central East
- Central West
- Downtown
- North East
- North West
- South Central
- South East
- South West
- Park Boundary

Seattle Parks & Recreation
healthy people healthy environment strong communities

0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles

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Map date: Wednesday, January 6, 2021.

APPENDIX D

Seattle Office of City Auditor Mission, Background, and Quality Assurance

Our Mission:
We conduct independent analyses of City programs and services with an equity and social justice perspective, making recommendations on ways the City can better serve the people of Seattle.

Background:
Seattle voters established our office by a 1991 amendment to the City Charter. The office is an independent department within the legislative branch of City government. The City Auditor reports to the City Council and has a four-year term to ensure their independence in deciding what work the office should perform and reporting the results of this work. The Office of City Auditor conducts performance audits and non-audit projects covering City of Seattle programs, departments, grants, and contracts. The City Auditor's goal is to ensure that the City of Seattle is run as effectively, efficiently, and equitably as possible in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

How We Ensure Quality:
The office's work is performed in accordance with the Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. These standards provide guidelines for audit planning, fieldwork, quality control systems, staff training, and reporting of results. In addition, the standards require that external auditors periodically review our office's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that we adhere to these professional standards.

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