

# Race and Social Justice Initiatives in the 2026 Proposed Budget

## Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of significant changes in the City’s 2026 budget that advance the [Race and Social Justice Initiative \(RSJI\)](#). The City implements additional initiatives within department base funding that are not included below in this summary of changes.

## City of Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative

There is significant evidence that the opportunities a Seattle resident can access, and the quality of life they experience, are both directly related to their race and where they live. People of color and other under-represented groups in the City of Seattle’s workforce face similar issues. To address racial inequities, in 2004 Seattle became the first city in the U.S. to establish a program, the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI), to explicitly eliminate institutional racism. Institutional racism exists when an organization’s programs, policies, and spending work to the benefit of white people and to the detriment of people of color, usually unintentionally.

The Office for Civil Rights leads the RSJI in the City and provides support for departments and staff. As part of RSJI, the City uses a Racial Equity Toolkit to guide policy, program, and budget decision-making toward options that actively support positive racial equity outcomes. The City also uses a racial equity lens to develop a workforce that is inclusive of people of color and other marginalized or under-represented groups at all levels of City employment.

Additionally, each City department has a “Change Team” to support internal transformation. The team – consisting of a group of employees who champion RSJI activities and strengthen a department’s capacity to get more employees involved – facilitates and participates in discussions on race, racism, and strategies to overcome institutional barriers to racial and social equity.

## EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

### Human Services Department

#### **Funding for Rental Assistance**

Expenditures \$4,000,000

The proposed budget includes revenues associated with the City’s proposed Business & Occupation Tax increase. The tax is anticipated to generate \$81 million in 2026, of which up to \$30 million is intended to mitigate the impacts of changes in federal funding and for administrative costs. The \$4 million in this item is backed by proposed changes to the Business and Occupation (B&O) Tax.

This item adds ongoing General Fund appropriation for homelessness prevention through rental assistance payments. The 2025 Adopted Budget included \$3.3 million for this same purpose. This item, when combined with the budget change titled “Funding for Eviction Legal Defense,” brings the total amount in HSD’s budget for homelessness prevention and rental assistance to \$11.5 million.

#### **Funding for Eviction Legal Defense**

Expenditures \$527,000

This item adds Payroll Expense Tax Fund authority to HSD for eviction legal defense related to tenant rent arrears. This work was previously done by the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI). This item when combined with the budget change titled “Funding for Rental Assistance” brings the total amount in HSD’s budget for homelessness prevention and rental assistance to \$11.5 million.

#### **One-time Funding for Community Solutions Unsheltered Homelessness Pilot Initiative**

Expenditures \$4,050,000

This item adds \$4,050,000 in General Fund funding on a one-time basis for a low-barrier shelter, housing navigation, and aftercare services pilot. The funds will support a contract with the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) and the Purpose Dignity Action (PDA) to provide outreach, navigation, and aftercare that connect individuals experiencing homelessness to shelter and housing resources. This investment strengthens the City’s capacity to support people experiencing homelessness with sustained, low-barrier services.

#### **Establish Reserve to Mitigate Federal Funding Impacts to Shelter and Housing**

Expenditures \$9,350,000

The proposed budget includes revenues associated with the City’s proposed Business & Occupation Tax increase. The tax is anticipated to generate \$81 million in 2026, of which up to \$30 million is intended to mitigate the impacts of changes in federal funding and for administrative costs.

This item adds appropriation to mitigate potential federal funding cuts for shelter and housing. The funding is backed by proposed changes to the Business and Occupation (B&O) Tax.

**Funding to Open and Operate Non-Congregate, Service-Enhanced Shelter Beds**

Expenditures \$7,827,500

This item adds General Fund appropriation in HSD to begin a substantial, multiyear expansion of the city’s capacity of non-congregate, service-enhanced shelter that will result in 305 additional shelter beds being opened and fully operating by the end of 2027 and allocates resources based on phased implementation over the next two years.

By Q4 2026, 155 new non-congregate, service-enhanced shelter beds will be open and serving clients; 2026 funding includes site identification, start-up costs, and three months of operating funds.

By Q4 2027, 305 non-congregate, service-enhanced shelter beds will be open and serving clients; 2027 funding includes site identification, start-up costs, and three months of operating funds for 150 new non-congregate, service-enhanced shelter beds. In addition, 2027 funding includes ongoing operations costs for the 155 non-congregate, service-enhanced beds that will come online in 2026.

Onsite services at all shelters will include case management and housing assistance, and for some units, intensive behavioral supports for unsheltered homeless adults living with significant un/under-treated challenges related to behavioral health and substance use disorders.

**Increase Funding for Outreach**

Expenditures \$1,070,000

This item adds General Fund appropriation for We Deliver Care. We Deliver Care outreach workers establish relationships and earn the trust of individuals. They offer care and treatment services to individuals suffering from substance use disorder and using drugs in public places along Third Avenue and the Chinatown International District. This brings total ongoing funding for the We Deliver Care program to \$3,470,000 in 2026.

**Increase Funding for Diversion Capacity**

Expenditures \$5,000,000

The proposed budget includes revenues associated with the City’s proposed Public Safety Sales Tax. The tax is anticipated to generate \$39 million in revenue to the City in 2026.

This item adds \$5,000,000 in ongoing General Fund for the LEAD program, supported by the proposed Public Safety Sales Tax revenue. This investment backfills prior one-time appropriations and expiring federal grant dollars, enabling the program to sustain its current caseload and continue accepting law enforcement referrals citywide. With this funding LEAD will be able to prioritize and respond to the highest-need referrals across the City of Seattle. The City’s total 2026 support of LEAD is \$20.4 million.

**Add Two Case Managers for Health 99 Response**

Expenditures \$400,000

Position Allocation 2.00

The proposed budget includes revenues associated with the City’s proposed Public Safety Sales Tax. The tax is anticipated to generate \$39 million in revenue to the City in 2026.

This item adds \$400,000 in 2026 in the General Fund to support two Case Managers, supported by the proposed Public Safety Sales Tax revenue. These case managers are part of the post-overdose team called Health 99 housed

in the Seattle Fire Department. This investment continues the expansion of the City's Mobile Integrated Health program.

**Funding for Detox and Inpatient Treatment Program**

Expenditures \$2,850,000

The proposed budget includes revenues associated with the City's proposed Public Safety Sales Tax. The tax is anticipated to generate \$39 million in revenue to the City in 2026.

This item adds General Fund appropriation dedicated for withdrawal management and intensive inpatient treatment bed capacity for those with substance use disorders (SUD). It is funded with new Public Safety Sales Tax revenue.

**Funding for DESC Opioid Recovery & Care Access (ORCA) Patient Outreach Division (POD)**

Expenditures \$1,240,000

The proposed budget includes revenues associated with the City's proposed Public Safety Sales Tax. The tax is anticipated to generate \$39 million in revenue to the City in 2026.

The ORCA Center is part of DESC's Downtown Behavioral Health Clinic. The Center offers a safe, welcoming space for people to recover after an overdose, start medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD), and take the first steps toward stability. Services are available on a 24/7 basis.

This item adds ongoing funding for the ORCA POD, an outreach team that meets people wherever they are — on the street, in tents, RVs, or housing — to start MOUD and provide follow-up care. It is funded with new Public Safety Sales Tax revenue.

**One-time Funding for Thunderbird Treatment Center**

Expenditures \$1,800,000

The proposed budget includes revenues associated with the City's proposed Public Safety Sales Tax. The tax is anticipated to generate \$39 million in revenue to the City in 2026.

This item adds \$1.8 million to support the completion of renovations and construction to ensure a timely reopening of the Seattle Indian Health Board's Thunderbird Treatment Center in 2026. Once reopened, the Thunderbird Treatment Center will offer expanded behavioral health services for those struggling with substance use disorders. The 92-bed residential treatment facility will implement evidence-, practice-, and culturally-based activities, including Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD), traditional health services, and 15 dedicated beds for pregnant and parenting adults. It is funded with new Public Safety Sales Tax revenue.

**One-time Funding to Prepare for New King County Crisis Center**

Expenditures \$500,000

This item adds one-time General Fund for programs and improvements to facilitate safe conditions and allow for the successful implementation of King County's safety and security plan for the Crisis Care Center facility that will be located in Capitol Hill.

The investments will include increased cleaning, an analysis based on 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design,' and the increased presence of first responders. The City's main objective is to build a safe and welcoming environment for residents, business owners, those who work in the area, and visitors to the city. Maintaining a

multi-tiered security approach is crucial for creating a safe atmosphere. This approach has been modeled after the reopening of City Hall Park and the new waterfront park, which employ REACH services, ambassadors, security staff, and Seattle Police Department personnel.

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for Opioid Facilities**

Expenditures	\$500,000
Revenues	\$500,000

This item redirects CDBG 2026 grant appropriation from the Office of Economic Development (OED) to HSD for additional funding to support opioid facilities projects.

**2% Non-Inflationary Provider Wage Increase**

Expenditures	\$5,071,213
--------------	-------------

In 2023, the University of Washington completed a provider wage study and the City Council passed Resolution 32094 concerning human services provider pay. In the resolution, the Council stated their intent to consider increases to HSD administered contracts in addition to inflationary adjustments required under Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) Section 3.20.060.

In 2024, the adopted budget included a 2% provider pay increase. This item adds an additional ongoing 2% provider pay increase, totaling to 4% added between 2024 and 2026. The \$5.1 million in this budget item is in addition to the SMC mandated inflationary contract increase of 2.6% (\$6.6 million) in 2026.

**One-time Funding for Food Banks**

Expenditures	\$3,000,000
--------------	-------------

The proposed budget includes revenues associated with the City’s proposed Business & Occupation Tax increase. The tax is anticipated to generate \$81 million in 2026, of which up to \$30 million is intended to mitigate the impacts of changes in federal funding and for administrative costs.

This item adds one-time appropriation in HSD for food banks and brings total funding in HSD for food banks in the proposed budget to \$6.5 million. The funding will support food purchase, staffing, donated food procurement, other program operations, and mobile food pantries and home delivery—which provide nutritious groceries to families, teens, homebound residents, and other food insecure communities needing food. HSD partners with local organizations in the Seattle Food Committee to increase city-wide food access through healthy, culturally responsive groceries. The funding is backed by proposed changes to the Business and Occupation (B&O) Tax.

**One-time Funding for Meal Programs**

Expenditures	\$1,000,000
--------------	-------------

The proposed budget includes revenues associated with the City’s proposed Business & Occupation Tax increase. The tax is anticipated to generate \$81 million in 2026, of which up to \$30 million is intended to mitigate the impacts of changes in federal funding and for administrative costs.

This item adds one-time appropriation in HSD for meal programs and brings total funding in HSD for meal programs in the proposed budget to \$2.9 million. Meal programs provide nutritious prepared meals to children, older adults, families, people experiencing homelessness, and other food insecure communities needing meals. Funds will support food purchase, staffing, donated food procurement, and other program operations. HSD partners with local organizations in the Meals Partnership Coalition to increase city-wide food access through

healthy, culturally responsive meals. The funding is backed by proposed changes to the Business and Occupation (B&O) Tax.

<b>LIVABLE &amp; INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES</b>
--------------------------------------------

**Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs**

**Support for Emerging Needs**

Expenditures	\$300,000
--------------	-----------

In the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, the B&O federal mitigation funding provides \$300,000 in one-time funds to address emerging needs for the city's immigrant and refugee community by supporting the expansion of rapid response efforts. These efforts involve partnerships with eight trusted community organizations to provide urgent services, such as legal consultations, Know Your Rights trainings, family safety planning, and a hotline for reporting immigration enforcement activity.

**Support for Workforce Opportunities, Immigration Legal Services, and Safety Programs**

Expenditures	\$3,700,000
Positions	2.0 FTE

In the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, the B&O federal mitigation funding provides \$3.7 million in one-time funds for services to immigrants and refugees. This includes \$1.85 million to expand and launch critical programs, including workforce development for youth and English language learners, legal assistance and safety services, rapid response initiatives, and immigrant access and navigation support, and also includes \$1.35 million for new initiatives, including the expansion of naturalization services, the development of immigrant youth career pathways, the enhancement of integration and civic engagement programs, strengthened community navigation services, and increased outreach through ethnic media, translation and community advisory resources. These funds also include staffing support for these programs.

**Office of Civil Rights**

**Housing Reparations Study**

Expenditures	\$50,000
--------------	----------

Building off the City's past investments and studies, this item adds \$50,000 for OCR to compile a housing reparations report that analyzes historical City laws, policies, and/or practices that were discriminatory towards descendants of Black slaves and resulted in quantifiable harm to this community. This should include an analysis of redlining, racially discriminatory housing covenants, and other biased housing policies. As part of this work, OCR will also compile other local, state, federal, genealogical, and academic analyses on the impacts of racial discrimination towards descendants of Black slaves. These funds may be used to support external stakeholder engagement and related program costs.

## Office of Housing

### **Reallocate Funding for the Mayor’s Proposed Anti-Displacement and Reparations Housing Fund**

Expenditures \$20,000,000

The proposed budget allocates \$20 million of the Office of Housing’s existing Payroll Expense Tax Fund budget to the first year of the Mayor’s proposed Anti-Displacement and Reparations Housing Fund, with the intent to fund \$80 million over four years.

### **Create Reserve for Northgate Commons Project**

Expenditures \$5,000,000

The 2026 Proposed Budget creates a one-time reserve, using existing Payroll Expense Tax Fund budget from the Office of Housing, to support the first \$5 million of the Seattle Housing Authority Northgate Commons Project, to which the City has committed \$20 million in total. This project focuses on the development of a transit-oriented, mixed-income, mixed-use community in North Seattle. The Seattle Housing Authority anticipates the project will include up to 1,400 homes, with an estimated 420 affordable homes. This reserve will support the first phase of this project beginning in early 2026, including demolition of existing structures on the site. The Executive intends to appropriate the remaining \$15 million funding for this project in 2027 and future years.

## Office of Economic Development

### **Provide Supports for Neighborhood Grocers**

Expenditures \$700,000

This one-time item, supported by the General Fund, will support the opening and expansion of small businesses offering healthy, fresh foods and cultural household essentials throughout Seattle neighborhoods. This support will encourage and incentivize food access, with a specific focus on food deserts, as well as new opportunities for corner stores and bodegas through changes proposed in the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Update.

### **Support Small Businesses through the Phố Đẹp Initiative**

Expenditures \$200,000

This one-time item, supported by the Payroll Expense Tax Fund, will provide small business and neighborhood supports as part of the Phố Đẹp (Beautiful Neighborhood) Initiative, a community-led effort to address safety and livability in Seattle’s historic Little Saigon neighborhood. These investments will enhance economic vibrancy by supporting business recruitment, providing resources for new businesses, and improving marketing throughout the neighborhood.

### **Support for a Community Workforce Training Center**

Expenditures \$250,000

This one-time item, supported by the General Fund, will provide funding to support capital costs for the development of a community workforce training center. The facility, to be developed and operated by Uplift Northwest, will provide space for job training and certification programs, dining, hygiene facilities, community activities and collaboration, administrative offices, and leasable commercial spaces.

**Office of Labor Standards**

**Enforcement of App-Based Worker Minimum Payment and App-Based Worker Deactivation Ordinances**  
Expenditures \$965,963

The Proposed Budget includes \$965,963 for the Office of Labor Standards to fund new activity to protect the rights of app-based workers through enforcement, policy development, and collaborative outreach and education programs for two labor standards:

- The App-Based Worker Minimum Payment Ordinance (SMC 8.37, passed in 2022 to take effect as of January 13, 2024) and
- The App-Based Worker Deactivation Ordinance (SMC 8.40, passed in 2023 with procedural enforcement starting Jan 1, 2025, and full enforcement starting June 1, 2027)

Revenue from the City’s Network Company License Fee backs these expenditures. The \$965,963 provides funding for 3 positions, data analysis projects, a labor pool, and outreach and communications specifically focused on these two labor standards. The City established these app-based worker labor standards to change the underlying systems creating race-based disparities in our community by strengthening job security, increasing income, and improving other terms and conditions of work. Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color face unique barriers to economic insecurity and disproportionately work in low-wage jobs with insecure working conditions. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows that Black and Latinx workers are overrepresented among app-based workers, comprising almost 42 percent of app-based workers but less than 29 percent of the overall labor force.

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Seattle Police Department**

**Add 1.0 FTE Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Officer**  
Expenditures \$212,055  
Position Allocation 1.00

This item increases appropriation authority by \$212,055 and adds ongoing position authority for 1.0 FTE Strategic Advisor 2 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Officer in SPD’s Relational Policing Division. In 2022, SPD identified an immediate need for a DEI Officer and added a term-limited position to address the need. This item adds a permanent position to continue the important work of overseeing and advising on department initiatives related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**CARE**

**Expansion of the Community Crisis Responder Team**  
Expenditures \$6,900,001  
Position Allocation 31.00

A \$6.9 million expansion of the CARE Community Crisis Responder (CCR) Team in the 2026 budget will double the number of response teams dispatched. Currently 24 CCR positions respond to calls throughout the city, and this item will add 24 positions (12 Community Crisis Responder I, and 12 Community Crisis Responder II) for a total of 48 CCRs, as well as an additional 6 Community Crisis Responder Supervisors to support and manage response calls; overall doubling CCR coverage across the city. A training manager position (Strategic Advisor 2) is also made permanent,



providing needed ongoing training and other support to the department.

Of the \$6.9 million, \$1.97 million is one-time funding to support the significant expansion in CARE. One-time funding pays for additional vehicles, and space improvements and/or changes for the district dispatching locations, as well as for the department's headquarters.

The revenues for this expansion are from the proposed 0.1% increase in Public Safety Sales Tax.

### **Community Police Commission**

#### **Restore 10% Vacancy Reduction in the Community Police Commission**

Expenditures \$146,426

This item restores a 10% salary reduction from the 2025 Adopted Budget to meet the General Fund revenue shortfall. While there have been vacancies in the past, the new Executive Director has filled all positions except the newly created Deputy Director. Fully funding and filling this position is consistent with the mandates of the Accountability Ordinance.

#### **Increase in Commissioner Stipends in the Community Police Commission**

Expenditures \$87,000

This item adds funding for the increase in Commissioner stipends (from \$550 to \$700 per month for Commissioner, and from \$550 to \$1200 per month for Co-Chairs). The stipend increase was part of the Police Accountability Ordinance revisions the Council passed in 2023. The ordinance did not include additional budget, requiring CPC to absorb these costs within its existing resources. This increase will provide funding for the forecasted annual amount for Commissioner stipends of \$144,000 in the CPC budget.

## **UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION**

### **Office of Sustainability and Environment**

#### **Expand Fresh Bucks Eligibility and Benefit Amounts**

Expenditures \$6,275,000

The proposed budget includes revenues generated by the City's proposed Business & Occupation (B&O) Tax increase. The tax is anticipated to generate \$81 million in 2026, of which up to \$30 million is intended to mitigate the impacts of changes in federal funding and for administrative costs.

The proposed budget includes revenues generated by the City's proposed Business & Occupation (B&O) Tax increase. The tax is anticipated to generate \$81 million in 2026, of which up to \$30 million is intended to mitigate the impacts of changes in federal funding and for administrative costs.

In OSE, B&O federal mitigation funding will support a one-time expansion of the Fresh Bucks program. Fresh Bucks currently provides \$40 per month in benefits to eligible households to buy fruits and vegetables at participating retailers and farmers markets. Funding pays for an increase in monthly benefits from \$40 to \$60 per month and increases enrollment by more than 4,000 new households, helping to address existing waitlists for participation. Funding is aimed at mitigating the adverse impacts of federal cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). These impacts include reductions in benefits beginning in October 2025, increases in

state cost-share requirements beginning in 2026, new restrictions on SNAP eligibility, and new work requirements.

**Support for Lake City Farmers Market Expansion**

Expenditures \$126,728

This item increases one-time funding for the Seattle Neighborhood Farmers Markets to expand the Lake City Farmers Market by 15 weeks through December and shift market hours from Thursday evenings to Saturday mornings. The proposed budget includes \$126,728 in General Fund for 2026, with a total commitment of \$317,000 over three years.

**Seattle Public Utilities**

**Additional Funding for Textile Waste Prevention Efforts by Community-Based Organizations**

Expenditures \$150,000

This item increases appropriations in the Solid Waste Fund on a one-time basis to fund programming that prevents textile waste and offers opportunities to refugee and immigrant women. This investment is intended to fund organizations that support refugee and immigrant women in overcoming barriers to employment while simultaneously diverting waste from Seattle's waste disposal system. The 2026 Endorsed Budget included \$150,000, added by a City Council amendment. This item doubles the budget for this effort, bringing the total amount of 2026 funding to \$300,000.