

Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI)

Introduction

This chapter provides background and context for [Race and Social Justice Initiative \(RSJI\)](#)-related budget additions throughout the 2021 Adopted Budget.

RSJI is a Citywide effort to end institutionalized racism and race-based gaps in City government. A key component of achieving this goal is the examination of City policies, projects, initiatives and budget decisions to determine how each item impacts different demographic groups in Seattle. Launched in 2004, Seattle was the first U.S. city to undertake an effort that focused explicitly on institutional racism. Since then, King County, and other cities – including Minneapolis, Madison, and Portland – have all established their own equity initiatives. RSJI’s long-term goals are to change the underlying system that creates race-based disparities and to achieve racial equity, as well as to:

- End racial disparities within City government so there is fairness in hiring and promotions, greater opportunities in contracting, and equitable services to all residents;
- Strengthen outreach and public engagement, changing existing services using Race and Social Justice best practices, and improving immigrant and refugee access to City services; and
- Lead a collaborative, community-wide effort to eliminate racial inequity in education, criminal justice, environmental justice, health and economic success.

RSJI works to eliminate racial and social disparities across key indicators of success in Seattle including: arts and culture, criminal justice, education, environment, equitable development, health, housing, jobs, and service equity.

Mayoral Direction

Soon after her inauguration, Mayor Jenny A. Durkan signed an [Executive Order](#) reaffirming the City's commitment to RSJI and a focus to apply a racial equity lens on actions relating to: 1) affordability, 2) education, 3) criminal justice, 4) environmental justice, 5) transportation equity, 6) labor equity, 7) women and minority business contracting equity, 8) removing internal structural and institutional barriers for City employees, and 9) arts and culture equity. The Executive Order also charged the Mayor’s Office to oversee and coordinate a review of the City’s current implementation of the RSJI and directed department directors, personnel within the Mayor’s Office, as well as the Mayor herself, to participate in implicit bias training.

Consideration of Race and Social Justice in the Mayor’s Office

Each City department has a “Change Team” – a group of employees that supports RSJI activities and strengthens a department’s capacity to get more employees involved. The team facilitates and participates in discussions on race and racism. These discussions increase individual and group understanding of how racism and other marginalizing factors affect equity and service provision.

Consistent with established practice since the launch of RSJI, all 2021 budget adjustments were screened for RSJ impacts. Departments used the City’s Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) or other tools to assess

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direct and indirect results of their proposals, and this analysis was then utilized in the decision-making process within CBO and the Mayor's Office.

Race and Social Justice Impacts in the 2021 Adopted Budget

Despite the economic downturn and uncertainty with the revenue forecast for 2021, significant departmental reductions, minimizing negative impacts on RSJ was a high priority in developing the 2021 Proposed Budget. Departments like the Office for Civil Rights and the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs took much smaller reductions than other departments. In addition, funding was prioritized for investments that would increase RSJ.

This section highlights specific examples of RSJI considerations in the 2021 Proposed Budget changes.

Taskforce for Investments in the Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Community

\$100 million of ongoing funding was reserved in the Finance General section of the 2021 Proposed Budget for allocation by a taskforce planned to begin in the fall of 2020. The taskforce will focus on investments in the following categories:

- Education opportunity
- Inclusive economy
- Land acquisition/community wealth building
- Climate justice and Green New Deal
- Community safety
- Community supports (safety net)

These funds are an ongoing, annual commitment to this community. After the taskforce recommendations are finalized, the Council will appropriate the funds to the departments responsible for delivery of service.

The Council reduced this initiative to \$30 million and put a proviso requiring Council approval before the funding can be spent, and reallocated the \$70 million. A \$28 million reserve is created for a Participatory Budgeting process, where community directly decides how funding should be invested. The Strategic Investment Fund is also reestablished with \$30 million in funding, to invest in areas at high risk of displacement and areas of low access to opportunity.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY LEARNING

Prenatal to 3 Grant Program

Based on a recommendation from the Sweetened Beverage Community Advisory Board (CAB), this item adds one-time Sweetened Beverage Tax (SBT) funding of \$1.5 million for a new pre-natal to 3 years old grant program for community-based organizations. DEEL will work closely with the CAB and King County Best Starts for Kids (BSK) to develop the grant program. Some gaps in prenatal-to-3 services have been identified through the BSK work. The CAB may consider identifying ongoing SBT funding in the 2022 budget process.

Childcare Resources and Referrals

The Mt Baker Allen Family Center is a community resource center co-located with 95 units of permanent supportive and permanently affordable housing in Southeast Seattle. The Center serves families living in or near poverty with a wide array of community-based services and support to shorten and prevent

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family homelessness and to strengthen vulnerable families, including childcare resources and referrals. This item continues funding for the childcare referral, parent coaching, and other training services. The 2020 Adopted Budget included funding for these services in the Human Services Department budget.

SEATTLE ETHICS AND ELECTIONS COMMISSION

Democracy Voucher Increase

This increase funds the Democracy Voucher program for the 2021 election cycle. It provides the funding needed for voucher payments of up to \$6.8 million, voucher printing and mailing costs, and temporary staffing increases for voucher processing and outreach work. The Democracy Voucher program allows all Seattle residents to participate in the process regardless of their income level. In 2021, the Mayor, City Council positions #8 and #9 (citywide) and the City Attorney will be on the ballot. This is one-time funding for 2021 only.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Secure Affordable Housing Site

This action will increase appropriation authority by \$250,000 in the Department of Finance and Administrative Services for operations and maintenance costs for the Office of Housing's Rainer site (formerly the Mount Baker UW Laundry site). In the long term, this site will be used to provide affordable housing and a community hub in the Mount Baker area. More access to affordable housing will help historically underserved populations in the area impacted by rising cost of living in Mt. Baker.

Expanded Use of the Wheelchair Accessible Services Fund

This action increases the Department and Finance and Administrative Services budget for the City's Wheelchair Accessible Services Fund by \$1.14 million. Fund revenues are from a surcharge paid on each transportation network company, taxicab and for-hire vehicle trip originating within the Seattle city limits. This proposal anticipates expanding access to wheelchair-accessible taxis helping those who rely on wheelchairs or other mobility-assisted devices in their daily lives. This could also increase business for wheelchair accessible taxis that are driven or operated by people of color.

HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Crisis Connections One Call

This item provides ongoing funding for what was originally a one-time 2019-2020 investment in the One Call single diversion portal operated by the nonprofit organization Crisis Connections.

Generations with Pride Senior Program

This item provides ongoing funding for what was originally a one-time \$180,000 investment to support Generations Aging with Pride, a senior center on Capitol Hill serving the LGBTQ community.

Legal Services for DVSA Survivors

This item provides ongoing funding for what was originally one-time funding for legal representation for survivors of sexual violence. This legal support defends the civil rights and wishes of sexual violence survivors regardless of the criminal and civil judicial systems' procedures and responses. This legal support includes protecting the privacy rights of survivors.

Mt. Baker Family Resource Center

This item continues support for what was originally one-time funding for the Mt. Baker Allen Family Center project. This a community resource center co-located with 95 units of permanent supportive and permanently affordable housing in Southeast Seattle. The Center serves families living in or near poverty

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with a wide array of community-based services and support to shorten and prevent family homelessness and to strengthen vulnerable families.

Critical Incident Community Responders

This item makes ongoing the City's one-time 2020 investment in Community Critical Incident Responders, a program operated by the nonprofit Community Passageways. This intervention was developed jointly between HSD and the Seattle Police Department in response to several shootings in the early part of 2020 as a community-based solution to mitigate and prevent shootings.

DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS

This item continues funding for leased space appropriated in the 2020 3rd Quarter Supplemental Budget Ordinance. Seattle King County Black Lives Matter, in coordination with the City of Seattle and Seattle & King County Public Health, will lease a space for delivery of direct services and the coordination of targeted services toward communities who are disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 public health crisis. Services will be focused on Black LGBTQIA, non-binary youth and youth adults and other youth and young adults.

SEATTLE OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

Title VI Compliance

This item adds a half-time position to the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to implement, monitor, and ensure citywide compliance with Title VI federal grant requirements. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance on the basis of race, national origin, and color. Over time, protected classes such as sex, age, and disability were added. Previously, OCR had a dedicated part-time position for Title IV compliance, but the position was abrogated in 2011, and work was reassigned to existing staff. Since then, staff have not had sufficient capacity to meet the demands of the work.

Race and Social Justice Summit

This item adds funding to OCR's budget for the City's annual Race and Social Justice Summit. Previously, OCR has received funding from the Office of Arts and Culture. The budget adds funding to OCR to ensure a stable funding source for this important work. The summit is open to both City employees and community members.

OFFICE OF LABOR STANDARDS

Transportation Network Company Fare Share Program

The Office of Labor Standards (OLS) is responsible for enforcing ordinances related to the Minimum Compensation and Deactivation of Transportation Network Company (TNC) drivers. TNCs classify these drivers as independent contractors and represent that they are exempt from existing minimum labor standards established by federal, state, and local law. A large number of those drivers are immigrants and people of color who have taken on debt or invested their savings to purchase and/or lease vehicles to provide TNC services.

The 2021 Adopted Budget includes the creation of two full-time positions on the OLS enforcement team, as well as appropriations for the outreach and implementation of the TNC ordinances. A new investigator will be responsible for investigating violations of and enforcing the City's labor standards and ordinances, particularly as they relate to TNC drivers and other gig workers. The new enforcement strategist will be responsible for developing case management strategies and investigative approaches

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for the department's enforcement team, particularly as they relate to the multiple new worker protection ordinances, some of which are the first of their kind in the nation.

OFFICE OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

General Fund Support to Equitable Development Initiative

The Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) was established in 2016 to provide investments in neighborhoods that support those most affected by displacement and low access to opportunity. The program's objectives include advancement of economic opportunity and wealth-building strategies, preventing displacement, and building on local cultural assets.

The EDI program is coordinated by the Office of Planning and Community Development and is guided by an external community advisory board representing impacted communities. EDI is normally supported by \$5 million in revenues from the Short-Term Rental Tax (STRT). The 2021 Adopted Budget provides \$4.7 million of General Fund resources to replace Short-Term Rental Tax revenues which are declining due to the COVID crisis. This funding is one-time and budget-neutral to maintain the \$5 million annual funding level.

Council provided \$1,575,000 of General Fund to support the Equitable Development Initiative. This item is budget-neutral and replaces Short-Term Rental Tax revenues that are in decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY & ENVIRONMENT

Sustainable Communities

The 2021 Adopted Budget includes \$3.4 million in the Office of Sustainability & Environment to continue a program through the first quarter of 2021 for emergency grocery vouchers to Seattle families in need. The proposed budget also continues the Fresh Bucks Voucher program which provides assistance to those who struggle to afford healthy food. Both these programs provide critical assistance, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, to Seattle residents with limited incomes and to predominantly BIPOC communities.

Environmental Equity

Despite the difficult budgetary environment, the proposed budget maintains existing programs and initiatives that further environmental equity with a particular focus on predominantly BIPOC and low-income communities. These initiatives include the Equity & Environment Initiative and the Environmental Justice Fund which center policy and programming on the communities most affected by environmental injustice. Also maintained in the proposed budget is the Duwamish Valley Program which addresses healthy environment, parks and open space, community capacity, economic opportunity, mobility and transportation, affordable housing, and public safety in the South Park and Georgetown neighborhoods.

SEATTLE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Equal Employment Opportunity Compliance

The Seattle Department of Human Resources (SDHR) is responsible for implementing, monitoring, and ensuring that the City of Seattle is compliant with Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Program federal grant requirements. Increased funding includes support for a half-time coordinator as well as software required to meet the mandated federal requirements for Title VI and other federal funding.

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Language Premium Pay

The City of Seattle is developing a premium pay policy for employees who are assigned to perform bilingual, interpretive, and/or translation review services for the City. SDHR will add a half-time position in the Workforce Equity division to serve as a subject matter expert to departments to help determine employee eligibility for language access service assessment, identify and track bilingual service assignments, and manage data regarding bilingual service assignments and employee language proficiency.

SEATTLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Health One Expansion

This item funds an expansion of the Health One program. These funds will support a second team of two firefighters and one case manager to respond to EMS calls that do not require emergency department transportation (low-acuity calls), to divert patients to appropriate destinations. A second team will enable the program to fully cover core operating hours during weekdays when critical partner services are open, and grow geographic coverage beyond Pioneer Square and Downtown to South Seattle, Ballard and the University District.

Low-acuity conditions affect some of the most vulnerable members of the community. A significant portion of patients are experiencing homelessness, with members of historically disadvantaged communities being more likely to experience homelessness than the general population. Expanding Health One will improve the program's reach and effectiveness.

In addition to the second Health One team that the Mayor proposed, Council added a third Health One team in the 2021 Adopted Budget.

SEATTLE MUNICIPAL COURT

Probation Services Reorganization

Seattle Municipal Court will reorganize probation services to transform pretrial justice by reducing in-person day reporting and moving to a collaborative Community Court model. It will also reduce traditional post-sentence supervision to focus on higher risk charges. The redesign reduces budget by \$1.4 million and cuts probation staff by 13 positions (25% staffing reduction).

There are many contributing factors that lead to racial disproportionality in the criminal legal system. These include the Seattle Police Department's arrest decisions and the Seattle City Attorney's decisions on what cases to prosecute. The Court acknowledges disproportionality exists and are committed to reducing disproportionality in how it works with and affects individuals. In 2019, the Court asked the Vera Institute of Justice to examine the impact of probation policies and practices on racial equity and gender equity as well as client success and well-being. Their analysis and review of best practices informs the redesigned approach, and the Court's commitment to working with partners across the system to reduce racial disproportionality

SEATTLE PARKS AND RECREATION

The financial shortfalls caused by the COVID-19 pandemic affect both the level of General Fund support and the earned revenues for Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR). As a result of these funding decreases, SPR had to make significant reductions in the 2021 Proposed Budget. SPR prioritized preserving discrete projects in BIPOC communities as well as services and projects in underserved neighborhoods. Instead, SPR is making significant cuts in its major maintenance program to allow other capital projects to move

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forward such as the community center stabilization projects at locations in South Seattle and land banked site development at Little Saigon, North Rainier and South Park.

SEATTLE PUBLIC UTILITIES

Public Hygiene Program

During 2020, Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) launched a comprehensive public hygiene program for the unsheltered population. As of fall 2020, three mobile hygiene trailers with shower facilities, as well as 15 hygiene stations with portable toilets and handwashing units, have been set up throughout Seattle. This program was expedited as an emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic, given the closures of community centers and other hygiene facilities; it also serves the goals of the Council's 2019 budget add for mobile public hygiene facilities.

The 2021 Adopted Budget funds this program on an ongoing basis by dedicating \$6.3 million in SPU to maintain and expand these public hygiene investments. Although this program provides critical needs related to the pandemic, it also provides for ongoing, unmet hygiene and public health needs for Seattle's unsheltered population. In doing so, it expands the City's services for a population that is disproportionately BIPOC, endures significant economic insecurity, and experiences health inequities. These investments bring homelessness-related spending at SPU to over \$12 million in 2021.