

LED BY
EQUITY + SHAPED BY
COMMUNITY

SEATTLE DEPARTMENT OF
NEIGHBORHOODS
2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Seattle
Neighborhoods

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Community,

As I reflect on the year behind us, one word rises above all others: connection. In 2025, the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods (DON) showed again and again what it means to lead with equity and be shaped by the community. Across every neighborhood and program area, our staff, partners, and volunteers transformed ideas into action and trust into impact.

This was a year of real accomplishment. We deepened relationships, delivered meaningful investments, and advanced work that met people where they are, whether through neighborhood-based engagement, expanded community partnerships, or innovative approaches to civic participation. Our department didn't just meet its goals; we raised the bar for what community-centered government can do.

I want to offer my deep gratitude to former DON Director Jenifer Chao, whose three years of leadership have been transformative. Director Chao led this department with clarity, care, and conviction, and under her guidance we built a bold, values-driven strategic framework that will guide our work for years to come. Her leadership strengthened our culture, sharpened our purpose, and positioned DON to lead with confidence into the future.

As we look ahead, the moment feels especially meaningful. The Department of Neighborhoods is stepping into our 35th year as a department, a milestone that honors decades of partnership, persistence, and people-powered change. We have a full year of celebrations and reflection planned, and we are excited to welcome our next Director, Quynh Pham, as we continue this journey together.

Thank you for believing in the power of community. The future is bright, and we are just getting started.

In community,

Sam Read

Interim Director, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

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STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Department of Neighborhoods (DON) developed a strategic framework that reflects our values, deepens community relationships, and will guide the department for the next three years.

The framework builds on what DON already does: centers racial equity, fosters trust, and supports community-led solutions by aligning DON’s expertise with greater focus for deeper impact. DON leadership and staff reviewed resources, held focus groups, spoke with stakeholders, conducted research, and organized a workshop to craft the DON strategic framework covering 2026-2028.



FOOD EQUITY FUND

The Food Equity Fund is a City grant program investing in community-led solutions that make it easier for Seattle residents to grow, learn about, and access healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant food. As food prices rose and uncertainty around federal nutrition benefits increased, the Food Equity Fund doubled down on what works: trusted partners, culturally rooted approaches, and investments led by communities experiencing the greatest food and health inequities.

POINTS OF PRIDE

Food Equity Fund Grant: deep investment in community-led access and food sovereignty

- \$1,750,239 awarded to 18 organizations expanding equitable access to food and culturally relevant nutrition.
- 90% of funded organizations are BIPOC-led.
- 98 of the eligible applications requested \$9.2 million, demonstrating both need and strong community demand.
- Three awardees were previous Starter Fund grantees; 5 of 18 were new to FEF.

among
FEF 2025
recipients
28%
were first-time
applicants

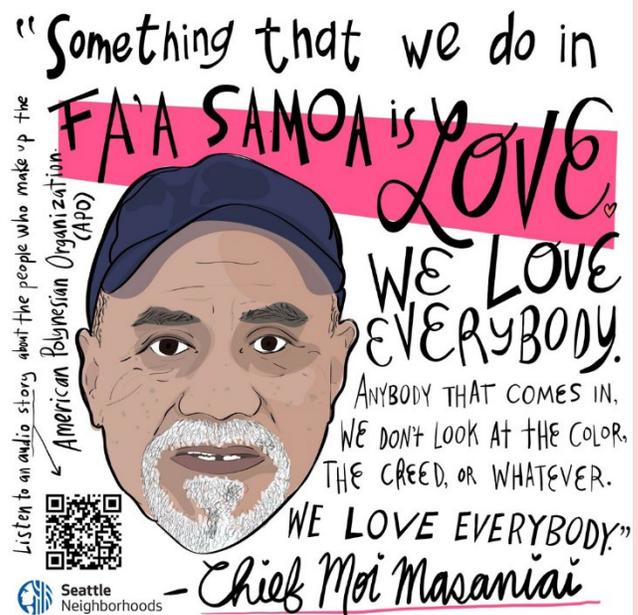
Starter Fund: growing grassroots capacity

- \$275,000 awarded to 11 organizations with annual budgets less than \$500k.
- 100% BIPOC-led, with 45% new to the Starter Fund.

American Polynesian Organization

Sharing a meal with others feels good. Food has always connected people and can break down cultural barriers, build connections, and evoke a feeling of wellbeing – both physically and mentally. And that is exactly what the Food Equity Fund grantee American Polynesian Organization meal program does each week for hundreds of low-income seniors living in South Seattle.

Listen to a powerful audio story produced by DON's communications team about the American Polynesian Organization: bit.ly/APO-Seattle.



Illustrated postcard featuring Chief Moi Masaniai

Participatory Budgeting

In partnership with Seattle Parks and Recreation, the Office of Sustainability and Environment, and DON's P-Patch Gardening Program, Food Equity Fund staff identified sites and laid the groundwork for the Participatory Budgeting: Urban Farming Grant. Through this program, our collective departments will identify at least three publicly owned green spaces to lease for urban agriculture and identify community partners through an RFP process for land stewardship, food education and production activities.



Food Equity Fund recipients in action

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic Preservation at Seattle’s Department of Neighborhoods is not about freezing the city in amber. It is about stewarding place, memory, and meaning so Seattle’s past actively serves its present and future.

In 2025, DON’s Historic Preservation program demonstrated how protecting important places in Seattle’s history is a powerful tool for equity, climate, and community-building. Numerous hours of public and volunteer engagement, technical expertise, and relationship-building, ensured historic places across Seattle remain relevant, accessible, and responsive to the people, especially communities historically excluded from decisions about land, development, and recognition.

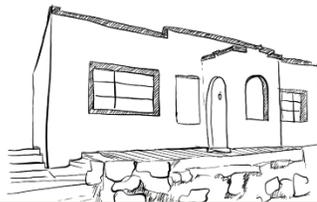
POINTS OF PRIDE

Historic Preservation staff supported an extraordinary volume and breadth of work across the city:

- Processed 396 Certificates of Approval, supporting timely, transparent reviews of proposed changes to historic properties.
- Approved five Special Tax Valuation applications, leveraging \$8.56 million in private investment for rehabilitation and adaptive reuse, including:



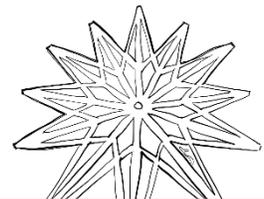
Rainier Edmonds Building
Columbia City



Eng Family Homestead and Nippon Kan
Chinatown International District



Continental Hotel
Downtown



Stewart House
West Seattle

Examples of sites receiving Special Tax Valuation

- Designated four new City Landmarks:
 - Bel-Boy House
 - Sunset Hill Community Hall
 - Wilde-Streatfield House
 - Burwell House
- 153 public meetings were held, ensuring community members had direct access to preservation in their neighborhoods.
- Launched the Seattle Disability Activism Project, an inclusive and intersectional exploration of disability history, activism, and the places connected to those stories.

Together, this work reflects a program operating at both scale and depth by balancing regulatory responsibilities with storytelling, community access, and long-term vision.



Metropole Building after renovation

Preservation in Action: Metropole Building

Vacant for 15 years, Metropole returned as a childcare center, community kitchen, conference space, arts and culture hub, interpretive center, and office space for nonprofit organizations led by or serving Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities.

All work was reviewed and approved by the Pioneer Square Preservation Board. The

result is one of the lowest-energy-use buildings in Seattle that provides a clear example of how preservation can minimize the carbon debt of demolition and new construction.

The Metropole stands as proof that historic preservation can simultaneously center BIPOC communities, advance climate goals, and restore civic life to long-neglected historic spaces.

“Thank you, DON staff, for your expert guidance and professional support throughout the historic preservation process. It truly was a positive experience during a defining moment in our story.”

Kittie, Downtown small business owner

COMMUNITY IMPACT AND EQUITY-CENTERED PRESERVATION

Historic Preservation deepened its commitment to equity and accessibility through multiple initiatives:

- **Completed the Seattle Disability Activism History Project**

Published a report and accompanying media that centered disability history and activism through an inclusive, intersectional lens, expanding whose stories are preserved and whose places are valued. Learn more and watch a panel discussion at MOHAI: bit.ly/46vcok8.

- **Landmarked First Indigenous Site**

Designation of *liq'təd* / Licton Springs Park as Seattle's first Indigenous Landmark, recognizing the site's deep cultural and historical significance.

- **Advanced Diverse Board Recruitment Goals**

Continued efforts to ensure preservation boards reflect the racial, cultural, age, renter, homeowner, and LGBTQ+ diversity of Seattle's neighborhood's, including the first non-English speaking person elected to the International Special Review District (ISRD) Board.

These efforts underscore a core tenet of the program: preservation is not neutral. It either reinforces exclusion or actively repairs it. DON chooses repair.



Illustrated postcard featuring a quote from Carol Rozumalski, a panel member from the Disability Activism History event hosted by MOHAI

COMMUNITY CAPACITY & SAFETY

DON's Community Capacity & Safety work is focused on one clear idea: safety and opportunity are built with communities, not for them. Across workforce pathways, neighborhood coalitions, and community-centered partnerships, we strengthen the relationships and systems that help Seattle residents access resources, shape decisions, and feel safer in the places they call home.

Building Career Pathways for English Learners

Through Neighborhood Career Pathways, DON partnered with the Port of Seattle and community service providers to create an onramp into port-related careers for limited-English-proficiency immigrants and refugees. The shared goals: build awareness of careers, increase access to preparation and application support, and strengthen English and digital skills needed for entry-level jobs.

Redefining Public Safety through Trust and Collaboration

DON began a partnership with Seattle Police Department (SPD) for the *Our City, Our Safety* conversation series. The work reflected a shared belief that public safety improves when residents can engage City leadership directly, ask questions, interpret information together, and shape next steps. DON's approach centered relationships, trust, and accessibility, so community feedback could meaningfully inform ongoing precinct-based conversations. The series continues in 2026.

DON's role drew on what we do best: culturally responsive outreach, language-access support through our Community Liaison network, and facilitation grounded in community voice.



Rainier Beach: A Safe and Beautiful Place for Youth Core Team meeting



The Seattle Police Department and Seattle Department of Neighborhoods welcomes you to a Community Conversation focused on safety and crime in your neighborhood.

We will listen, learn, and work together to address the issues that matter to you. We will also share updates on steps we have taken to reduce crime where you live.

February 10, 2026
6:00 - 7:30 pm
Loyal Heights Community Center
2101 NW 77th St.

You share and we will listen.

RSVP:
SPD_OurCityOurSafety@seattle.gov
www.seattle.gov/police/events



The City of Seattle encourages everyone to participate in its programs and activities. For disability accommodations, materials in alternate formats, accessibility information, or requests for language interpretation contact SPD_OurCityOurSafety@seattle.gov as early as possible.

English

Community Conversations with SPD flier

“We want to create opportunities for Seattle residents to interact with the police in a neighborly way so they can establish relationships and trust...and develop community alternatives to policing and create a sustainable approach to safety.”

Denise Colvin, DON Community Capacity & Safety Manager.

Strengthening Relationships and Community Support in Chinatown International District

After years of coordination and community-led engagement, the CID Visioning Advisory Group finalized the CID Ten-Year Vision Action Plan, which provides context and direction on how the City can translate the vision into accountable tasks. DON's CID Community Capacity Coordinator facilitated the group's monthly meetings and met with each member individually to understand needs and concerns for long-term sustainability. This guidance led to:

- The creation of a self-governance structure and leadership board.
- Expanded membership representing a more diverse cross section of the neighborhood.
- Prioritization of budget for Action Plan priorities, including impact of the World Cup, safety, building repair, and community health and wellness.
- Active engagement with Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment, and Office of Planning and Community Development on projects impacting the CID.



Evening at Hing Hay Park in the Chinatown International District

Public Safety Coordinators

The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods' first formal community safety work began in the CID. Following recommendations of the community-led CID Public Safety Task Force report released in 2016, City Councilmembers added funding for a Public Safety Coordinator. That position started in 2019 and became a model that was replicated in South Park and Ballard, in subsequent years. A new coordinator position was added in Capitol Hill in 2025.

Public Safety Coordinators connect residents, business owners, and City departments together to address crime and the perception of safety in their neighborhoods. Each coordinator is employed by a community-based organization, with funds contracted through DON:

- Chinatown International District Business Improvement Area
- Seattle Neighborhood Group in South Park
- Ballard Alliance
- Greater Seattle Business Association in Capitol

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

DON’s Boards and Commissions are part of Seattle’s “civic nervous system” bringing community members directly into the policy making process. When commissions are staffed, supported, and accessible, community voices move from the sidelines into the room where decisions are made.

SEATTLE RENTERS’ COMMISSION

The Seattle Renters’ Commission is made up of people living in an array of rental housing types including students, low-income renters, people with past felony convictions, subsidized housing residents, and those who have experienced homelessness. After more than a year of vacancies, the City Council approved 15 appointments in 2025. With 14 of 15 seats filled, the commission restored its rhythm.



Seattle Renters' Commission, 2025

POINTS OF PRIDE

- Published three public statements related to proposed policy and budget items.
- A workgroup designed and adopted a commission-led process to appoint two renters to the Seattle Social Housing Developer Board (and create a replicable selection process for future recruitment).
- In 2025, the commission invested in access by using funds to print translated “Renting in Seattle” guides for distribution.



Renting in Seattle pamphlet

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT COMMISSION

The Community Involvement Commission advises DON and other City departments on the best ways to reach Seattle communities, especially historically underrepresented communities, to ensure growing demographic groups are represented in the City's decision-making and that barriers discouraging people from participating are eliminated.

POINTS OF PRIDE

- Established three new subcommittees (Communications & News, Events & Engagement, Research & Assessment) to create measurable goals and data-informed recommendations.
- Refined administrative processes for tracking and feedback to maximize meeting productivity.

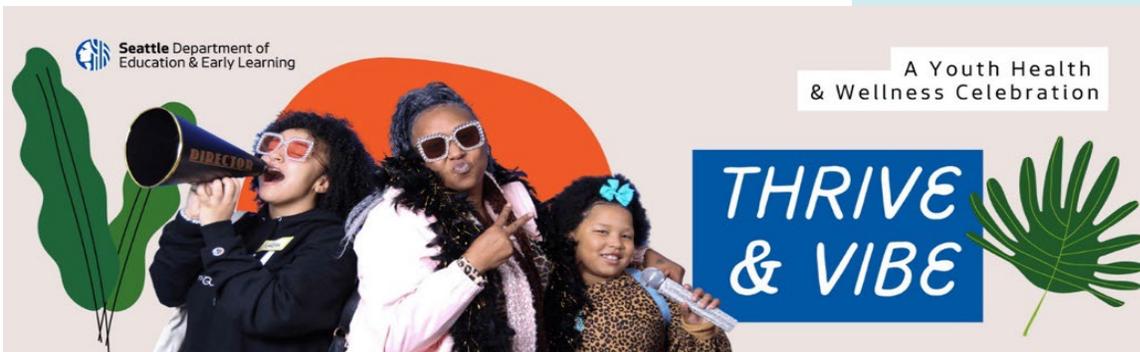


Seattle Youth Commission, 2025

SEATTLE YOUTH COMMISSION

The Seattle Youth Commission (SYC) gives teenagers the task of discussing issues impacting local youth with elected officials.

- SYC’s Education Subcommittee supported Department of Education and Early Learning’s (DEEL) Families, Education, Preschool, and Promise Levy Renewal process.
- SYC connected with youth from the Turkish American Cultural Association of Washington (TACAWA) to learn about their culture. The two groups partnered on outreach and engagement at the International Children’s Friendship Festival.
- SYC partnered with the Washington Bus Education Fund, the Green New Deal Oversight Board to directly contribute to the One Seattle Climate Action Plan update.



Advertisement for DEEL's Thrive and Vibe Celebration

Thrive & Vibe – A Youth Health and Wellness Celebration

SYC collaborated with DEEL for Thrive & Vibe, a youth-centered health and wellness celebration. Commissioners provided input on event design, youth-friendly activities, and outreach strategies, to create a culturally responsive space connecting youth to mental health support, creative outlets, wellness resources, and trusted community organizations.

“Thanks for taking a leap of faith with youth voices this year...through our collective action, we created powerful moments and planted many good seeds. Thanks to our partners at DON for seeing us, supporting us, and being with us in this work!”

--Zeynap, TACAWA as part of International Children’s Friendship Festival

INDIGENOUS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC) is a critical bridge between Tribal Nations, urban Native communities, and the City of Seattle. Through convenings, educational forums, and intergenerational engagement, the IAC ensures Native priorities are not only heard but integrated earlier and more meaningfully into City decision-making and policies.

Advanced Native-Led Housing Solutions

The IAC hosted an educational webinar focused on how local governments and housing providers can partner with Tribal Nations to leverage Indian Housing Block Grants, apply Indian Preference, and deliver culturally responsive property management. The webinar brought together more than 40 policymakers and leaders to discuss real-world successes, ongoing gaps, and opportunities to strengthen housing systems that respect Tribal sovereignty while meeting urgent community needs.



Indigenous Advisory Council
logo by Andrea Wilbur Sigo
(Squaxin Island/Skokomish)

Strengthened Government-to-Government Relationships

The IAC co-hosted the second City of Seattle Tribal Nations Summit with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations. The summit included elected leaders and staff from ten federally recognized Tribes, representatives from major Indian organizations, and participation from 23 City departments, executive leadership, legislative offices, and regional partners.

The summit reinforced shared commitments to early consultation, collaboration, and respect for Tribal sovereignty, while creating space for direct dialogue on issues impacting Tribal governments and urban Native communities.



Seattle Parks and Recreation Tribal Nations Gathering

“True collaboration requires early, meaningful consultation and recognition of Tribal sovereignty—not just as a legal requirement, but as a pathway to durable, doable, and just solutions.”
--Josh Bagley, Vice Chair, Suquamish Tribe



NAN Youth Summit

Centering Native Youth Voice and Leadership

In partnership with urban Indian organizations, the IAC participated in a Native youth listening session and political engagement summit, reinforcing a commitment to intergenerational learning and healthy civic participation. Through these spaces, the IAC gathered Native youth priorities and amplified them across City departments, ensuring young peoples lived experiences inform the policy conversations that shape their futures.



Native Action Network's Youth Political Empowerment Summit

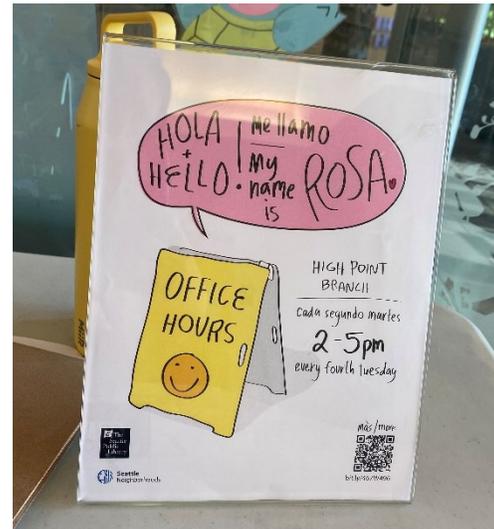
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COORDINATORS

DON's Community Engagement Coordinators (CECs) serve as the City's connective tissue, turning concerns into coordinated action, building relationships, and bringing City programs directly to residents. In 2025, they did what the job quietly demands and loudly delivers: they showed up, listened deeply, and followed through with action neighborhood by neighborhood.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Office Hours at Seattle Public Libraries (SPL): Meet People Where They Are

The SPL x DON Office Hours pilot, now extended into 2026, turned civic access into something real: a table staffed by people who can translate City systems into action. The program brought CECs into seven neighborhood library branches for monthly office hours. This increased DON's visibility in neighborhoods and established a consistent, trusted place for real-time problem solving and relationship-building. This work expanded through partnerships, like *Amigos de Seattle*, a local Spanish-language radio program.



Office hours sign

District 1 Safety Town Hall: Center Relationship-Based Safety

Southwest Seattle CEC Rosa Garcia supported Councilmember Rob Saka's community safety town hall in North Delridge, High Point, and Snake Hill. DON's role emphasized that long-term safety depends on relationships and trust. Rosa acted as the primary point-of-contact for ongoing outreach, relationship-building, and resident involvement.

Emergency Hub Community Building Sessions: Tools Communities Can Use

Southeast CEC Alvin Edwards partnered with Cindi Barker and Seattle Emergency Hubs to

develop four training courses for hub captains focused on outreach, engagement best practices, language access, public speaking, and other City communication tools.

One Seattle Day of Service: Citywide Coordination at Scale

As lead for the One Seattle Day of Service initiative, Central Seattle CEC Najma Sheikh coordinated 2,500 volunteers and approximately 100 sites, managing the citywide inbox, supporting customer service, addressing accessibility needs, and connecting residents directly to site managers so volunteer participation was smooth and safe.

COMMUNITY ACTIVATIONS

DON is grounded in the core belief that effective engagement is not an add-on: it is foundational to civic infrastructure. Through intentional design, internal alignment, and partnerships rooted in trust, this work strengthened how the City shows up in neighborhoods, how departments collaborate with one another, and how residents experience access to government.

POINTS OF PRIDE

Best Day Ever

In 2025 Seattle Chamber of Connection and DON partnered on planning Best Day Ever, a new, neighborhood-based community-led event series that will launch in 2026 with a focus on belonging, volunteerism, and civic connection. DON's Civic Engagement team managed the framework development, helped establish a district-based approach, and coordinated with the Chamber on program design, partner identification, and communications. The first of seven neighborhood activations will be held in collaboration with Cultivate South Park in March 2026 with additional district-based events planned throughout the year in each City of Seattle council district.



Best Day Ever pilot event, 2025

Anti-Displacement Resource Fair

The team worked closely with former Councilmember Solomon's External Affairs Director to shape an accessible and informative event connecting residents to housing stabilization and displacement prevention resources, including coordinating translation and outreach, and serving as the Councilmember's producing partner for planning, coordination, and on-site engagement.



DON Staff at the Anti-Displacement Resource Fair

NEIGHBORHOOD MATCHING FUND

Rooted in DON’s commitment to equity and community leadership, Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF) supported grassroots, community-driven projects that strengthened neighborhoods, built belonging, and expanded civic participation across Seattle.

In 2025, NMF saw historic levels of investment, demand, and community impact, demonstrating the program’s resilience and role as a direct and trusted investment in community power.



From left: NMF recipients talking to community about Emergency Hubs; DON Staff at a community event

POINTS OF PRIDE

The Neighborhood Matching Fund awarded \$2.3 million (\$2,285,934 actuals) to 112 community-driven projects across Seattle.

- Community Partnership Fund (CPF)
 - \$1,969,870 awarded to 46 community projects.
- Small Sparks Fund
 - \$311,064 awarded to 65 community projects.
- Increased community demand
 - 30% increase in CPF applications.
 - 16% increase in Small Sparks applications.



The NMF team partnered with Seattle IT to launch a collaborative pilot for the Technology Matching Fund. Delivered on a highly compressed timeline, this cross-departmental effort expanded outreach and increased access to digital equity investments citywide.

**STRONGER TOGETHER:
TECHNOLOGY
MATCHING FUND**

43
years of
community
impact



Rooted in Roosevelt Celebration

Rooted in Roosevelt

With a \$5,000 Small Sparks grant, “Rooted in Roosevelt” became the largest community event in the neighborhood in decades. Featuring local performers, businesses, and food vendors, the event drew more than 1,000 attendees – more than triple their expectations!

Live2Dance Wali Diwali

A Community Partnership Fund grant of \$50,000 helped make the largest Diwali celebration to date in Seattle a reality, creating visibility, understanding, and appreciation of Indian and Hindu culture. With 50 exhibitions and performances from small businesses and local artists, the event created space for relationship building and cultural exchange for more than 4,000 attendees.

“This NMF project brought positive changes to our community by empowering youth with new skills and confidence... This program changed and improved the lives of many young people, their families, and the broader community.”

**--Somali Community Services of
Seattle (GRIT Project)**

“Funding from the NMF will support music ensemble concerts with our Latino Youth Ambassador Ensemble...Community grants like this support the engagement of community volunteers and artists who create a positive impact across Seattle.”

**--Elisabeth Roberts,
Orquesta Northwest**

COMMUNITY LIAISONS

DON's Community Liaisons (CL) are independent contractors from specific communities that bring deep expertise and strategy around the needs of their communities and support City projects through culturally relevant outreach and engagement.

POINTS OF PRIDE



Community Liaisons conducting outreach with Seattle Public Utilities

- Seattle Department of Transportation: Supported nine ongoing projects on Sound Transit 3 (Ballard Link Extension), Senior Regional Reduced Fare Program, and RapidRide J Line, and new work with the Safe Streets for All and Vision Zero initiatives.
- Seattle City Light: Supported eight ongoing projects by organizing focus groups, attending community events, building relationships with community groups, and providing feedback on project design and outreach.
- Seattle Human Services Department: CLs outreach helped the Age Friendly Seattle Gold Card directory grow by nearly 50% and added 18 new businesses.
- Seattle Public Utilities (SPU): Added four new projects, bringing SPU's portfolio to 12 CL-supported projects that will continue cultivating trust across City government in 2026.

COMMUNITY LIAISONS: A Bridge Between City Departments



Community Liaisons' Community Solar Team

Building a Cross-Departmental Engagement “Field Lab” in South Park

A Spanish-speaking CL and the DON CL Program Advisor coordinated a South Park walking tour with three Seattle City Light Program Managers, a DON Equity & Engagement Advisor, and DON’s Southwest Community Engagement Coordinator to observe community safety issues firsthand. The group discussed how workforce development, Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure, and utility assistance programs can be better tailored to the neighborhood.

This was a new model where City staff met community together rather than coordinating parallel events. It turned “coordination” into something physical, practical, and impactful to residents across Seattle.



Postcard with a quote from Linda Li

EQUITY AND ENGAGEMENT ADVISORS

Equity and Engagement Advisors (EEAs) strengthen the City of Seattle’s capacity to design, deliver, and sustain community-centered public work, particularly for communities furthest from government. Through strategic partnerships, trusted relationships, and equity-driven engagement models, EEAs help City departments move from intention to implementation, ensuring that programs, plans, and investments are shaped by the voices and lived experiences of the communities they serve.

POINTS OF PRIDE

- The EEA team was recognized with the Seattle Management Association Race and Social Justice Award, honoring exceptional leadership in dismantling institutional barriers and transforming civic engagement.

Delivering Equity Through Partnership

EEAs translated equity commitments into concrete deliverables.

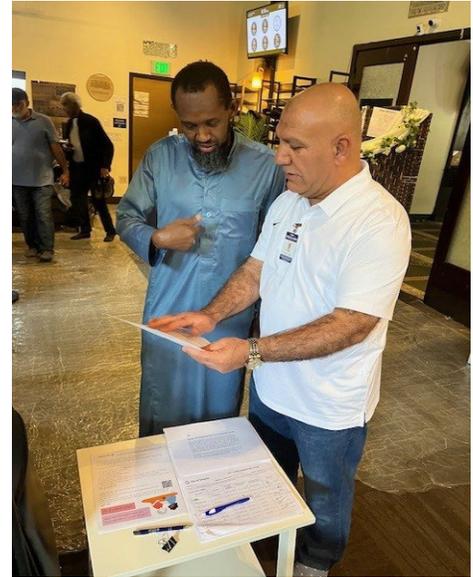
- **Lake City Community Center**
Supported Seattle Parks & Recreation to shape a community engagement plan for the future Lake City Community Center.
- **Utility Affordability Access**
Provided leadership with Human Services Department, Seattle City Light, and Seattle Public Utilities to improve utility assistance delivery through:
 - Community partnerships
 - Training a cohort of community liaisons
 - Incorporating community feedback into program improvements
- **Equitable Engagement Systems**
 - Increased WMBE engagement and contracting with SPU, SDOT, and SCL.
 - Achieved increased investment in Equitable Engagement Tours program.
 - Supported transition of engagement data into a customer relationship management system to strengthen long-term relationships and accountability.
- **Project Specific Engagement**
Developed equity-centered outreach, materials, and website content for SPU drainage and wastewater projects, ensuring accessibility, plain language, and language access.



Cedar River Watershed Tour, 2025

Aging and Disability Services Community Outreach and Engagement Strategic Plan

Our Equity and Engagement Advisors helped the Human Services Department (HSD) reach their equity goals by collaboratively designing a 5 to 6-year community outreach and engagement plan. Recognizing that effectively serving traditionally underserved communities requires understanding how they prefer to receive resources, the Equity and Engagement Advisor structured this project around community-centered principles. HSD’s Aging and Disability Services staff, community partners, and senior centers were surveyed and consulted to identify gaps, opportunities, and priority communities. First, we gathered first-hand stories from older adults, caregivers, people with disabilities, urban Natives, Latiné and Black elders, and LGBTQIA+ elders through focus groups and a community survey. These insights then directly informed outreach strategies and recommendations, ensuring the right approaches, building trust through genuine community input, and fostering a collaborative environment where all voices—staff, partners, and community members—are heard and valued.



Community members reviewing a survey

Equitable Engagement Cedar River Watershed Tours

Through a partnership between Seattle Public Utilities and DON, EEAs worked with DON’s Community Liaisons to facilitate eight Equitable Engagement Tours of the Cedar River Watershed for 184 BIPOC, veteran, senior, and young family community

members. The program connected underserved populations to guided tours, reduced barriers to access, and provided food, transportation, planning, and organizing costs for community-based organizations. The program connected people in the Seattle area to the source of their drinking water and invited them to reflect on the history of the area and cultural connections we have to water.



Group of community members at a tour of Cedar River Watershed

P-PATCH GARDENING PROGRAM

For more than five decades, the P-Patch Community Gardening Program has been one of Seattle’s most enduring expressions of community power.

In 2025, P-Patch continued to evolve as both a legacy program and a living system by expanding access, centering equity, and deepening belonging across Seattle’s diverse neighborhoods. From green thumbs to long-time gardeners, P-Patches create space for urban residents to grow community connections and food security...as well as some delicious food!

POINTS OF PRIDE

Growing Access, Nourishment, and Community

- Hosted the 3rd Annual Earth Day Resource Fair at the Northwest African American Museum
 - 250+ attendees, 6 cultural liaisons providing interpretation, and 10 community vendors participated.
 - Free seeds, fertilizer, and gardening resources for community.
- **Plot Fee Assistance**
 - 768 multicultural families received plot fee assistance.
 - \$64,481 distributed to reduce financial barriers.
 - 20+ languages represented in gardens, including Amharic, Cantonese, Hmong, Somali, Spanish, Vietnamese, Tigrinya, Ukrainian, and more.
- **Volunteer Power**
 - 33,526 volunteer and community hours—a 21% increase from 2024.
- **Giving Gardens**
 - More than 41,000 pounds of produce donated to local meal programs.



Gardeners harvesting vegetables for donation

“Department of Neighborhood’s P-Patch Growing for Giving is the BEST! In this time of so much strife and darkness, it’s a beautiful coming together of passionate volunteers giving back through Mother Nature, wanting to make a difference, and creating true community.”

– Jennifer Maciejewski, Delridge P-Patch

LISTENING TO GARDENERS, GROUNDED IN TRUST

During the 2025 plot renewal process, P-Patch staff worked with DON Communications to develop a comprehensive Gardener Survey designed with a results-based accountability framework to better understand the needs, concerns, and demographics of the P-Patch gardeners and to improve our service to this community.

What we heard:

- Plot fee assistance is a critical tool for removing financial barriers.
- Gardeners overwhelmingly reported positive experiences.
- Average satisfaction score: 4.43 out of 5, based on ~1,300 responses.

ADVANCING EQUITY AND RECLAIMING RELATIONSHIP TO LAND

P-Patch prioritizes communities historically excluded from access to land and green space.

- Nearly 40% of new gardeners placed through priority equity guidelines.
- 235 plots assigned to BIPOC and low-income gardeners.
- Expanded access to 27 gardeners with disabilities through accessible beds or partially accessible garden beds.
- Multilingual engagement reflected the lived reality of Seattle’s communities.
- 644 new plot assignments.

“For the first time in 34 years of living, I have a piece of dirt attached to the earth to garden in. It changed my life forever.” –Queen Pea P-Patcher

A CITYWIDE CONNECTOR

The P-Patch program supports other departments’ initiatives through outreach, people-power, guidance, and expertise.

In 2025, a partnership with Seattle Police Department helped to address gardeners’ safety and security concerns by providing personal safety training and using data to identify and respond to spikes in illegal activity.



Ribbon fence celebration at Greg’s Garden; High Point Market Garden Youth and Food Giveaway



People's Academy for Community Engagement alumni celebration, 2025

PEOPLE'S ACADEMY FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The People's Academy for Community Engagement (PACE) continued to serve as a vital on-ramp to civic participation, helping community members navigate City government, build relationships, and move from curiosity to confidence. At its core, PACE is a civic education program about connection and action: between neighbors, between community and government, and between lived experience and decision-making power.

POINTS OF PRIDE

PACE deepened its commitment to culturally responsive civic education by partnering with five linguistically and culturally specific community-based organizations to deliver multiple PACE cohorts. More than 50 participants completed PACE programs in 2025, learning how City government works, how to influence decisions, and how to organize people and resources to drive meaningful change.

The impact of this work is measurable. In the 2025 ACRS cohort, participant surveys showed significant growth in confidence and trust:

- Comfort navigating City staff, programs, and resources increased from 4.58 to 7.9 out of 10.
- Overall experience interacting with the City improved from 5.21 to 8 out of 10.

These shifts reflect more than knowledge gain. They signal a change in how participants see themselves in relationship to City government.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

PACE addressed two persistent barriers to civic engagement this year: disconnection from government and social isolation. Bringing participants directly into conversation with City staff and elected officials, and by creating cohort-based learning spaces, PACE reduced intimidation, built familiarity, and fostered relationships that extend beyond the classroom.

This impact rippled outward. Several PACE alumni reported applying for other civic leadership programs after learning about them through PACE communications, and alumni began stepping into leadership roles themselves. In one standout example, a 2024 PACE participant returned to lead a City Government 101 session for a 2025 cohort through Wa Na Wari’s Resident Assembly Reimagined, demonstrating the program’s growing pipeline of community-led leadership.

ADVANCING EQUITY AND ACCESS

PACE advanced equity by meeting people where they are. Partner organizations shaped curriculum based on the communities they serve, participants received \$250 completion stipends, and cohorts included language translation when needed. These choices lowered barriers to participation and honored community expertise.



PACE Workshop

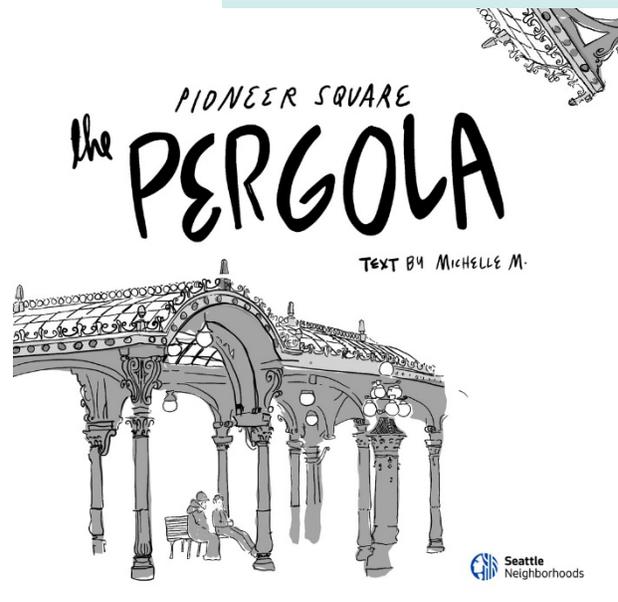
COMMUNITY STORYTELLING

At the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, community stories are at the center of our work. We open our platforms to community voices, commission community members to share their stories, and produce content in partnership with community. Ultimately, this work builds bridges and connects residents to government and to each other. These stories offer community members space to share opinions, culture, and experiences in their own voice. Through storytelling, our community has shown us that it is far less about agreeing, and more about taking the time to listen to each other so that everyone is seen and heard. It is what each neighborhood across Seattle brings to life.

STORIES IN PLACE

Our city is full of unique places that play a significant role in shaping our communities and our individual and collective identities. As Seattle continues to grow and change, we asked communities to share some of the local spaces they hold dear. In 2025, we commissioned four pieces from community members to showcase some of these important places, creating illustrations that incorporated community quotes for two additional spots.

- Union Bay Natural Area
- Mt. Baker Park
- West Kong Yick
- East Kong Yick
- “The Hill” next to Spectrum Dance Theatre on Lake Washington
- The Pioneer Square Pergola



Stories in Place: The Hill by Amber Flame; The Pioneer Square Pergola by Michelle M.

HIGH POINT MOMMAS

One submission for our special *Stories in Place* series expanded into a collaborative community event celebrating a group of women known as the High Point Mommas. The DON Communications team worked with Tracey Thompson, whose own mother was part of the Mommas; to honor these women for their community advocacy and to recognize the role they played in the rich civil rights history of Seattle. The event brought the Old High Point community together to celebrate this group of women, reminisce about their experience growing up in the neighborhood, and hear many untold stories of Seattle’s history that underscore the importance of community and what can be achieved when we come together to address injustice.



PARTNERSHIP WITH SEATTLE CHANNEL

The DON Communications team established a unique partnership with the Seattle Channel to highlight community members, events, and organizations doing dynamic work across the city, including:

- Hmong Flower Farmers
- Grand Illusion Cinema
- Seattle Emergency HUBS

EXPANDING COMMUNITY STORIES

Throughout 2025, we established contracts with community organizations and local creatives to expand community storytelling in 2026 with a focus on elevating stories celebrating DON’s 35th anniversary.

CLOSING

As the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods closes this chapter, we do so with deep pride. The work behind us has shown that vibrant cities are built from the ground up, through relationships, trust, and the belief that communities know what they need. That legacy is not something we simply inherit, it is something we are responsible for carrying forward.

In 2026, we step into our 35th year with momentum and intention. Through the implementation of our new strategic framework, we will continue investing in community leadership, supporting neighborhoods through change, and strengthening partnerships that allow community and government to move in alignment. Our work will remain rooted in equity, shaped by community, and guided by the understanding that belonging is foundational to a thriving city.

While our focus remains steady on the path ahead, this coming year also presents an opportunity to stop and take in the view. A time to acknowledge how far we have come and honor what we have built together.

Our 35th anniversary is not just a milestone; it is an invitation. An invitation for the people of Seattle to celebrate with us and with each other. Share stories. Connect with neighbors. Discover something new about your city. Throughout the year, we will gather, rejoice, listen, and tell the stories that define Seattle's neighborhoods, past and present, from South Park to Lake City, Rainier Beach to Broadview.

Thirty-five years in, we move forward together: carrying the wisdom of our neighborhoods, the courage of our communities, and the shared belief that Seattle is strongest when it is shaped by all of us.