



**Seattle** Office of  
Inspector General

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# **Sentinel Event Review of the Police Response to the Mayday USA Rally in Cal Anderson**

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**February 12, 2026**

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## Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an in-depth, community-centered review of the Seattle Police Department (SPD) response to the Mayday USA rally and counterdemonstration in Cal Anderson Park on May 24, 2025 (referred to in this report as “the Event”).<sup>1</sup> The Office of Inspector General (OIG), in collaboration with a panel of community members and SPD, initiated a Sentinel Event Review (SER) to identify contributing factors resulting in the escalation of tension and conflict, arrests, and uses of force by SPD.<sup>2</sup>

The SER process is a collaborative stakeholder effort to identify root causes of significant incidents and design systemic improvements to prevent their recurrence. This report provides panelists’ suggested recommendations for improving SPD response to crowd events, drawing on insight from their unique perspectives on the Event and lived experiences in the Seattle community. Panelists affirmed they understood the purpose of the review was not to assign individual blame or culpability for actions taken during the incidents reviewed.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the panelists were tasked with identifying issues that contributed to the poor outcomes at the Event and corresponding approaches to improve SPD response to crowd events while protecting constitutional freedoms. Nothing in this report is a determination of civil or criminal liability.

The SER panel process was cut short due to a violation of confidentiality by one community panelist, and panelists were unable to develop consensus contributing factors or recommendations. The violation undermined the shared commitment to accountability and trust building. Community and SPD came to the table in good faith, taking personal and professional

*At the outset of the SER discussions, panelists developed shared rules of engagement to create an atmosphere of respect and trust. All agreed maintaining confidentiality of group discussions was essential to fostering candid, honest dialogue in the interest of improving police protest response in Seattle.*

*Panelists engaged in robust discussion for each of the three panel sessions - sharing perspectives, finding common ground, and developing a deeper understanding of the complexities of demonstration participation and management.*

*After three successful panel sessions, one panelist violated the agreement not to disclose specific details of the panel discussions. The trust necessary to continue open deliberation was broken, so the SER was discontinued prior to a final meeting to develop consensus contributing factors and recommendations.*

*As such, this report describes the discussions, analyses, and takeaways from the three panel sessions. It captures panelists’ observations and proposed recommendations but does not provide consensus contributing factors or recommendations.*

*OIG appreciates the willingness of panelists to engage on this issue. OIG particularly acknowledges those community members with lived experiences of physical, emotional, and financial harm by law enforcement who engaged in good faith efforts to build relationships and improve trust with SPD. OIG also recognizes the candor and openness of SPD panelists, a crucial aspect of the SER process.*

1 MayDay USA is Christian fundamentalist movement. See: [Mayday USA](#).

2 The SER process is intended to gather and report community and SPD officer input and recommendations on protest response. This report does not contain legal conclusions.

3 The Office of Police Accountability (OPA) investigates allegations of employee misconduct relating to SPD policy and federal, state, and local law. OPA investigates complaints and recommends findings to the Chief of Police. OPA conducted seven investigations into allegations of officer misconduct on May 24. At the time of publication, five investigations have been concluded (see: 2025OPA-0196; 2025OPA-0198; 2025OPA-0200; 2025OPA-0201; 2025OPA-0225).

risks to build relationships and repair harm. Those panelists engaged sincerely, openly, and honestly. The disclosure of specific details from panel discussions diminished the potential impacts of the SER process and sacrificed the time, energy, and vulnerability contributed by other panelists. This report presents a summary of panel discussions and recommendations from the discussions. The report was reviewed by many of the panelists, but does not provide true consensus of findings, which is the goal of the SER process.

## Incidents Considered

The Event spanned seven hours and culminated in 23 arrests and 16 reported uses of force by SPD. OIG reviewed four key aspects of the day's events:

1. The process to grant a park use permit to a fundamentalist rally in a historically LGBTQ+ neighborhood and the short time frame for SPD to prepare for the Event, including early engagement efforts by the Police Outreach and Engagement Team (POET).<sup>4</sup>
2. The attempted arrest of a counterdemonstrator for misdemeanor property destruction and 11 additional arrests.
3. The use of bicycle fencing to create a counterdemonstration zone, as well as the escalation of conflict, arrests, and uses of force related to the barricade.
4. The continued crowd control protest posture of SPD after the conclusion of the Mayday USA rally. (*Note: The panel discussions were discontinued prior to review of this incident.*)

## Summary of Discussed Contributing Factors

Panelists identified 66 contributing factors leading to the Event, including factors related to:

- **City Procedures:** Coordination procedures between SPD, Seattle Parks and Recreation, the Mayor's Office, and the City Attorney's Office limited SPD advance knowledge of the permitted rally and hindered SPD planning efforts.
- **Cultural Context:** There is important cultural significance of the Capitol Hill neighborhood, and specifically Cal Anderson Park, for LGBTQ+ communities.<sup>5</sup> This context is particularly salient against the backdrop of federal actions that threaten transgender rights. The lack of acknowledgement or understanding of this context by SPD contributed to the heightening tensions among police and counterdemonstrators.
- **Anticipatory Defensiveness:** Outdated assumptions by SPD that "antifa"<sup>6</sup> and "black bloc"<sup>7</sup> are violent groups intent on confrontation with police, leading SPD to misjudge the need for more significant crowd control tactics, including uses of force.

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4 The City of Seattle permitting process must follow applicable laws regarding the First Amendment.

5 This report contains multiple references to the queer and trans community and uses the term "LGBTQ+" for clarity and consistency. Other terminology may be utilized when referring to direct statements made by panelists or the anti-transgender agenda promoted by MayDay USA.

6 See: BBC - [What is Antifa and why is Donald Trump targeting it?: Antifa: Definition, History, Tactics, and Legal Status - LegalClarity](#).

7 "Black bloc" refers to a defensive collective action tactic used by demonstrators internationally since the 1980s. Demonstrators wear all black, often with face coverings, to show solidarity, prevent retaliation by employers or authorities for First Amendment activity, and protect against chemical munitions used offensively against them. For law enforcement, "black bloc" is widely considered an offensive tactic for coordinated protest actions (see: [Understanding the Black Bloc | Police Magazine](#)).

- **Differentiation:** Assumptions about the motivations of attendees created a breakdown in communication and hampered the ability of POET and the Community Response Group (CRG) to appropriately identify potential instigators of violence.

See Appendix A for all 66 contributing factors organized by incident.

## Summary of Discussed Recommendations

Panelists made 24 suggested recommendations to SPD and the City of Seattle. The recommendations fall into the following categories:

- **Community Legitimacy** – Addressing the lack of trust in SPD by various Seattle communities, as well as the equity impacts of SPD outreach and intelligence gathering processes.
- **Situational Awareness** – Acknowledging the need for SPD to shift its mindset when responding to demonstrations by minimizing the belief that protesters work as a unified, oppositional group, rather than a diverse population of individuals with varying reasons for attending.
- **Communication** – Improving the ability of SPD to safely facilitate crowd events by intentionally building trusting relationships with a diverse set of individuals and community organizations prior to planned events.
- **Tactics** – Improving SPD crowd management tactics by prioritizing dialogue policing and targeted enforcement tactics to safely facilitate First Amendment activity.

See the Recommendations section below for the full list of discussed recommendations.

## Introduction

On April 8, 2025, Seattle Parks and Recreation approved a permit for MayDay USA, a Christian fundamentalist movement, to hold a rally dubbed “#DontMesswithOurKids” in Cal Anderson Park on May 24, 2025. The rally was part of a five-city tour promoting anti-LGBTQ+, anti-abortion viewpoints and advocating for “the sanctity of human life [and] the sacrality of biological gender.”<sup>8</sup> Many in the community expressed concerns leading up to the Event, questioning why the City would grant a permit for this rally in the historic heart of the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>9</sup>

Hundreds attended the MayDay USA rally, which included free haircuts for children, a rock concert, and proselytizing to the attendees. Hundreds of counterdemonstrators also gathered to protest the rally.<sup>10</sup> SPD used bicycle fencing to separate the rally venue and counterdemonstration zone, and POET officers attempted dialogue with MayDay USA security and counterdemonstrators to keep the groups separate. Counterdemonstrators began pushing closer to the rally venue as both groups grew. Officers used batons, bicycles, oleoresin capsaicin spray (OC spray, or “pepper spray”), and PepperBall launchers against counterdemonstrators to maintain the fence line and make arrests.<sup>11</sup> SPD arrested 23 counterdemonstrators for property destruction, assault, and obstruction; most charges were eventually

8 [MayDay USA Seattle, WA | Christians Engaged – Pray Vote Engage.](#)

9 The First Amendment places limitations on the ability of Seattle Parks and Recreation and the City to deny permit applications.

10 Both events – the MayDay USA rally and the gathering in response to it – were considered demonstrations by SPD. For this report, OIG uses “counterdemonstrators” to refer to the group demonstrating against the MayDay USA rally.

11 [14.090 - Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control - Seattle Police Department \(WA\) - PowerDMS.](#)



dropped.<sup>12</sup>

In the wake of the Event, community members and organizations denounced SPD's handling of the Event and called for the City to review the permitting process, as well as the uses of force and arrests by SPD.<sup>13</sup>

Former Mayor Bruce Harrell issued a statement asserting MayDay USA purposefully selected Cal Anderson "to provoke a reaction" but "anarchists" infiltrated the counterdemonstration to incite violence.<sup>14</sup> MayDay USA organizers criticized the Mayor's characterization of the rally and objective, and organized a protest outside City Hall on May 26, 2025. That demonstration lasted five hours. SPD closed a portion of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue adjacent to City Hall and used bicycle fencing to separate protestors and counterdemonstrators. Eight counterdemonstrators were arrested for assault during that event.<sup>15</sup> The following day, a related organization announced a second permitted rally planned for Cal Anderson on August 30, 2025.<sup>16</sup> City representatives clarified the permit had not yet been approved and indicated the City aimed to work with rally organizers to find a location for the rally.<sup>17</sup>

On June 7, 2025, OIG committed to conducting a SER of SPD planning and response to the demonstrations.<sup>18</sup> In preparation for the August 30, 2025 rally, OIG engaged with community and the Mayor's Office to support a location change. OIG also worked with SPD to support improvements to operational and tactical planning.<sup>19</sup> On August 19, an agreement was reached to move the rally to Gasworks Park. The rally and counterdemonstration on August 30 remained largely peaceful - resulting in one arrest and no reported injuries, uses of force, or complaints to the Office of Police Accountability (OPA) – and highlighted the value of constructive pre-event engagement with community and City agencies.

OIG aimed to utilize the SER process to assess the Event, evaluate the various factors that contributed to the escalation into force and arrests, and develop a set of consensus recommendations designed to improve the facilitation of First Amendment rights in Seattle and to rebuild trust among SPD and community. Due to a breach of confidentiality by one panelist, the panel was unable to complete review of all SER incidents or to develop consensus contributing factors and recommendations. This report presents a summary of panel discussions and findings/recommendations. These were reviewed by many panelists, but do not provide a true consensus that would have been possible with group deliberation.

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12 [Judge orders release of 7 protesters after Cal Anderson Park rally arrests.](#)

13 [ACLU-WA statement on anti-LGBTQIA2S+ rally in Cal Anderson Park - ACLU of Washington.](#)

14 [Mayor Harrell Statement on Extreme Right-Wing Rally at Cal Anderson Park - Office of the Mayor.](#)

15 [Pro-LGBTQ Protesters Stuck Outside Barricades As Far-Right "Rattle In Seattle" Took Over City Hall - PubliCola.](#)

16 [Sean Feucht on X: "We have a permit from the @CityofSeattle for #LetUsWorship on August 30th....".](#)

17 [Church groups say holding another Cal Anderson Park rally in August — UPDATE: 'Not granted' | CHS Capitol Hill Seattle News.](#)

18 [OIG Press Release Review of Cal Anderson May 24.pdf.](#)

19 OIG published a memo on August 29, 2025 describing these efforts: [OIG SER Cal Anderson.pdf.](#)

## Methodology

OIG began data collection, analysis, and community outreach on June 7, 2025.

## Data Collection

OIG reviewed data from a variety of sources, including:

- Social media, including X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, etc.;
- Print and video coverage from mainstream media (e.g., newspapers, TV, etc.) and video bloggers;
- City of Seattle documents;
- Body-worn video (BWV) of SPD officers;
- Investigations by the Office of Police Accountability (OPA);
- SPD arrest reports;
- SPD Incident Action Plans (IAPs), event debriefs, and after-action reports;
- SPD radio transmission log;
- SPD policy manual;
- SPD public statements, documents, and videos; and
- SPD Use of Force (UOF) reports.

Using these materials, OIG compiled a timeline to guide expert and panel analyses.

## Expert Analysis

OIG worked with Professor Clifford Stott, an expert in crowd psychology, to review the permitting process and Event.<sup>20</sup> Professor Stott identified several aspects of SPD pre-event planning and real-time decision-making which contributed to the perceived escalation of tension and conflict between police, counterdemonstrators, and rally attendees.

## Perspective Gathering

OIG worked with the Community Police Commission (CPC) to engage with community about this incident to identify potential panelists and to seek a range of perspectives to ensure a thorough and comprehensive review. In July, CPC circulated a flyer asking impacted community

“Each SER participant agreed not to share specifics of the review in advance of a final consensus report. Confidentiality provides space for each participant to have voice, as well as the opportunity to have their perspectives expanded by others in the group. Additionally, the agreement allowed the participants in the SER to share information, transparency, and empathy. A similar agreement has guided each of the 20+ SERs the Quattrone Center has moderated. This is the first time the agreement has been violated.”

- John Hollway, Senior Advisor, Quattrone Center for the Fair Administration of Justice, University of Pennsylvania

<sup>20</sup> Professor Clifford Stott MBE is a globally recognized scholar of crowd psychology, collective behavior, and public order. He is the Professor of Policing and Research and Academic Director for the Centre for Policing Research and Learning at the Open University in the United Kingdom. Professor Stott’s work has transformed international understanding of riots, protest, football disorder, and the governance of public space. See: [OU Centre for Policing Research and Learning](https://www.open.ac.uk/research-centres/cprl/).



members to share their experiences.<sup>21</sup> In August, after seeking input from community and at CPC Commission meetings,<sup>22</sup> CPC referred one community member to OIG for participation in the SER panel. CPC also compiled statements from impacted community members which were shared with panelists by OIG.

## SER Panel

The SER panel comprised a diverse group of six community members, six SPD personnel from various command levels, and Inspector General Judge.<sup>23</sup>

OIG contracted with Professor John Hollway, from the University of Pennsylvania<sup>24</sup> to facilitate panel discussions and Professor Karin Martin, from the University of Washington<sup>25</sup> for trust building. The panel was scheduled to convene three times: once for trust building and establishing a foundation of knowledge necessary to understand the process, once to review the chronology and key incidents, and once to identify contributing factors and formulate actionable recommendations.

Panelists engaged in robust dialogue for those three sessions. It was determined a fourth meeting would be necessary to complete the incident review and identify contributing factors and recommendations. Due to the confidentiality breach, OIG was unable to reconvene panelists for the fourth session and panelists were unable to review the final incident or complete their discussions. This report presents the discussions which took place over the three sessions regarding:

- The City permitting process, and SPD planning and engagement;
- The attempted arrest of one subject and eleven additional arrests; and
- The use of bicycle fencing to designate a counterdemonstration zone.

The panel did not review the last identified issue—the continued protest posture by SPD after the conclusion of the MayDay USA rally.

This report provides a chronology of each incident reviewed by the panel, followed by a summary of panel discussions and a list of “contributing factors” observed by panelists that likely played a role in the negative outcomes of force, arrests, and further distrust. The final section summarizes recommendations discussed by panelists. The recommendations do not represent consensus recommendations agreed upon by the panel, but rather, suggestions made by panelists during discussions. The report was shared with several panelists for review and feedback.

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21 [‘Your Voice Matters’ — Police Commission seeks ‘community members impacted’ by Seattle Police crackdown on Cal Anderson May 24 protest | CHS Capitol Hill Seattle News.](#)

22 [Meeting Agendas and Minutes - Community Police Commission | seattle.gov.](#)

23 See Appendix B for Panel membership.

24 [John F. Hollway C’92, MAPP’18 • Faculty • Penn Carey Law.](#)

25 [Karin D. Martin - Evans School of Public Policy & Governance.](#)



## Permitting, Planning, and Engagement

### Incident Chronology

On April 8, 2025, Seattle Parks and Recreation approved the MayDay USA rally permit for May 24, 2025, at Cal Anderson Park.<sup>26</sup>

In compiling documentation for the Event, OIG was unable to confirm the exact process for the MayDay USA permit application. The Stranger reported that MayDay USA initially applied for a “special events permit.” Events that necessitate coordinated City services require a special events permit and are referred to the City’s Special Events Office for review and approval by the Special Events Committee.<sup>27</sup> The committee includes the Chief of Police and other City department heads.<sup>28</sup>

The special event permit application submitted by MayDay USA requested a street location near Pike Place Market but was denied by the Special Events Committee.<sup>29</sup> Organizers were then offered three other locations, including Cal Anderson Park. They submitted a “park use” application for Cal Anderson to Seattle Parks and Recreation.<sup>30</sup> Park use permits generally do not require Seattle Parks and Recreation to notify SPD or other City departments if the use permit is granted.<sup>31</sup> The MayDay USA permit application indicated SPD presence was not necessary and that MayDay USA intended to use private, undercover security.

SPD became aware of the planned rally on May 14, 2025, and included the rally in that day’s intelligence briefing. An SPD planning meeting was held on May 21, with meeting notes identifying three groups expected to gather at the park:

1. A “church group counter to trans movement” expected in the park between 2:00pm and 9:30pm;
2. An “antifa” group expected to meet at Broadway at noon; and
3. A “pro-trans group” expected to meet in the park at 2:00pm.

A punk rock performance was also granted a permit for the fountain area north of the MayDay USA rally zone.<sup>32</sup>

SPD assigned personnel from POET,<sup>33</sup> CRG,<sup>34</sup> and the Situational Awareness Team (SAT)<sup>35</sup> to staff the Event.

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26 See Appendix C for the event permit.

27 [Permitting Process - Special Events | seattle.gov](#).

28 [Special Events Committee | seattle.gov](#).

29 [The City Let Anti-LGBTQ Religious Zealots Take Over Cal Anderson - The Stranger](#).

30 See Figure D for the Seattle Park and Recreation park use permit application.

31 [Park Use Permits - Parks | seattle.gov](#).

32 It is unclear whether the punk rock performance was planned as a response to the MayDay USA rally.

33 POET was established in 2020 to improve SPD’s ability to engage with event organizers and participants. POET officers conduct outreach prior to crowd events to form relationships, encourage constructive dialogue, and ensure First Amendment protections.

34 CRG was established in October 2020 to assist with 911, emergency response, and demonstration management. CRG acts as SPD’s primary demonstration management group.

35 SAT consists of plainclothes officers who observe crowds to coordinate with POET and CRG to provide real-time updates to the Incident Commander.

Figure 1 below shows the map used by SPD for planning.

Figure 1. SPD Event Map



SPD officers arrived at the park mid-morning to separate the demonstration and counterdemonstration zones with bicycle fencing. By 11:30am, a few small groups of counterdemonstrators had gathered at the north end of the park; some requested information from POET officers about SPD expectations for the day. POET officers also engaged with MayDay USA attendees and security to identify potential safety risks.

By 12:30pm, dozens had gathered for the MayDay USA rally. Several counterdemonstrators stood on the rally side of the SPD barricade with signs and megaphones. POET officers asked the counterdemonstrators to return to their designated side of the barricade, immediately calling in CRG to enforce the counterdemonstration zone boundaries when their requests were ignored.

After CRG was called, but before they had arrived, counterdemonstrators approached POET officers to clarify the parameters of the permit, question perceived changes in barricade location, and express concerns about MayDay USA attendees prohibiting counterdemonstrators from accessing public restrooms. POET officers spoke with counterdemonstrators but were unable to assuage community concerns related to the permit, barricade, or restroom access.

See Figure 2 below for a map of the Event area, barricade, and park restrooms.

**Figure 2. Event Map with Barricade Separating Rally and Counterdemonstration Zones**



## Panel Discussion

Panelists discussed SPD intelligence and planning, assumptions related to terminology describing groups as “antifa” and “black bloc,” and POET engagement with rally attendees and counterdemonstrators.

### Intelligence and Planning

The SPD Intelligence Unit received notification of the planned rally on May 14. SPD panelists indicated they understood the cultural implications and likelihood of friction between demonstrators and counterdemonstrators if the rally was held at Cal Anderson. SPD contacted MayDay USA organizers three days before the rally to suggest moving the rally to Westlake Park in downtown Seattle; the organizers declined. SPD panelists expressed frustration that Seattle Parks and Recreation did not notify the City Attorney’s Office, the SPD Special Operations Center (SPOC), or the Intelligence Unit when the park use permit was approved.<sup>36</sup> Panelists agreed Seattle Parks and Recreation did not comprehensively “vet” MayDay USA or the permit application, though acknowledged Seattle Parks and Recreation does not have intelligence resources and must take permits at “face value.”<sup>37</sup>

Panelists discussed the planning meeting notes identifying the “church group counter to trans

<sup>36</sup> SPD panelists noted the potential benefit of including the City Attorney’s Office in the permitting process to consult on First Amendment protections.

<sup>37</sup> The City of Seattle must adhere to the First Amendment when approving permits.

movement,” as well as an “antifa group” and “pro-trans group.” SPD panelists described the Department’s concern that the “antifa” and “pro trans” groups would attract “bad actors,” which became a key factor in SPD planning.

Community panelists questioned how SPD gathers and evaluates intelligence. The community panelists noted community members were aware of the planned rally in April and felt the lack of awareness by SPD prior to May 14 indicated a lack of outreach with affected community members. SPD panelists explained the Intelligence Unit uses only open-source information and provides consistent updates via email to appropriate Department personnel. Panelists identified a disparity in the gathering and assessment of open-source intelligence – SPD had intelligence on “antifa” from open-source data but not MayDay USA. The rally came after five months of federal actions harming the transgender community (including limiting access to medical care, rescinding Constitutional protections, and barring people from obtaining legal identification documents), and prompted many in the community to believe MayDay USA was intent on confrontation.<sup>38</sup> Community panelists underscored their deeper understanding of this broader context and their ability to identify potential public safety impacts that SPD may not have perceived.

Suggestions for alternative intelligence gathering processes were discussed. Panelists agreed on the need for SPD to enhance information flow through improved and expanded community engagement. Intelligence gathering must be safe, equitable, and include outreach to diverse grassroots organizations. With increased trust from community, SPD can implement an impartial, relational system of intelligence gathering to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of planned events.

## Terminology

Panelists discussed the terminology used in the planning meeting notes and the distinction between the “church group” versus “antifa,” “black bloc,” and “anarchists.” It became clear that SPD uses the terms “antifa” and “black bloc” interchangeably and with far less nuance than community members. One police participant explained both are terms used for “anyone that’s going to throw a rock” at them. Community panelists expressed frustration that SPD associates “antifa” and “black bloc” with agitators intent on causing chaos and committing criminal acts. They questioned how SPD applies those labels to individuals as neither “antifa” nor “black bloc” are established organizations. Applying them to anyone who identifies as “anti-fascist” or wears black to demonstrations was described by community panelists as “careless” and “escalatory.” Community panelists described black bloc as a defensive means against police violence, and would instead describe these individuals as coming prepared to protect community from misconduct or “bad acts” by SPD.

SPD panelists stated “antifa” and “black bloc” terms are holdovers from the 1999 WTO protests<sup>39</sup> and the 2020 protests in response to the murder of George Floyd,<sup>40</sup> and asked community panelists their preferred terminology. Panelists discussed the need to differentiate between individuals and groups in a crowd, and for SPD risk assessments to include an evaluation of the various intents and motivations for people participating in a demonstration. Panelists pointed to the political implications of references to “antifa,” noting its usage seems to result in a presumptive escalated response by SPD. They expressed concerns about the impact of SPD leadership labeling groups as “church groups” vs. “antifa” without context and an understanding of cultural implications. This remains a concern for community as the White House

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38 [Trump’s Assault On Transgender Rights | American Civil Liberties Union.](#)

39 [Seattle WTO protests of 1999 | Globalization, Activism & Impact | Britannica.](#)

40 [Seattle Times - 2020 Protest Timeline.](#)



designated “antifa” as a domestic terrorist organization in September 2025.<sup>41</sup>

Panelists discussed the need for SPD to understand the cultural identities of people in a crowd to appropriately respond to public order events without unintentionally escalating conflict. Community panelists pointed to key contextual factors necessary for SPD to consider, including the national rhetoric around transgender individuals, the attendance of six SPD officers at the January 6, 2020 insurrection at the Capitol,<sup>42</sup> and fear about how the Department would respond if federal agents targeted transgender people in Seattle. SPD manages over 900 crowd events per year, in most cases without visible police presence. In contrast, the strong visible presence of SPD was itself escalatory for counterdemonstrators, who felt targeted based on their identities and felt SPD was there to protect an anti-LGBTQ+ hate group in a park with historical significance for the LGBTQ+ community.

## Engagement

Panelists watched a short video lecture about the evolution of crowd psychology theory presented by Professor Stott. The video explained that previous crowd psychology theory posited crowds as fundamentally violent, easily hijacked by agitators, and prone to “mob mentality.” Empirical research instead indicates crowds are inherently rational, self-regulating, and identity based, and that group behavior (collective action) in crowds is meaningful and relational. Group-level identities are shaped by shifting dynamics of power and legitimacy, and influence behavior (e.g., indiscriminate uses of force by police result in loss of legitimacy and skew crowd behavior toward confrontation with police).

Effective crowd management requires a baseline understanding of group identities and intergroup dynamics to effectively facilitate First Amendment activity. Dialogue-based policing, the basis for the SPD POET program, has been successfully implemented internationally by law enforcement agencies to support the legitimacy of crowd management operations by prioritizing education, facilitation, communication, and differentiation.<sup>43</sup> Police must be knowledgeable of group identities to facilitate lawful behavior through effective communication, and must differentiate between peaceful participants and those seeking to do harm to ensure targeted, proportionate responses to maintain police legitimacy.

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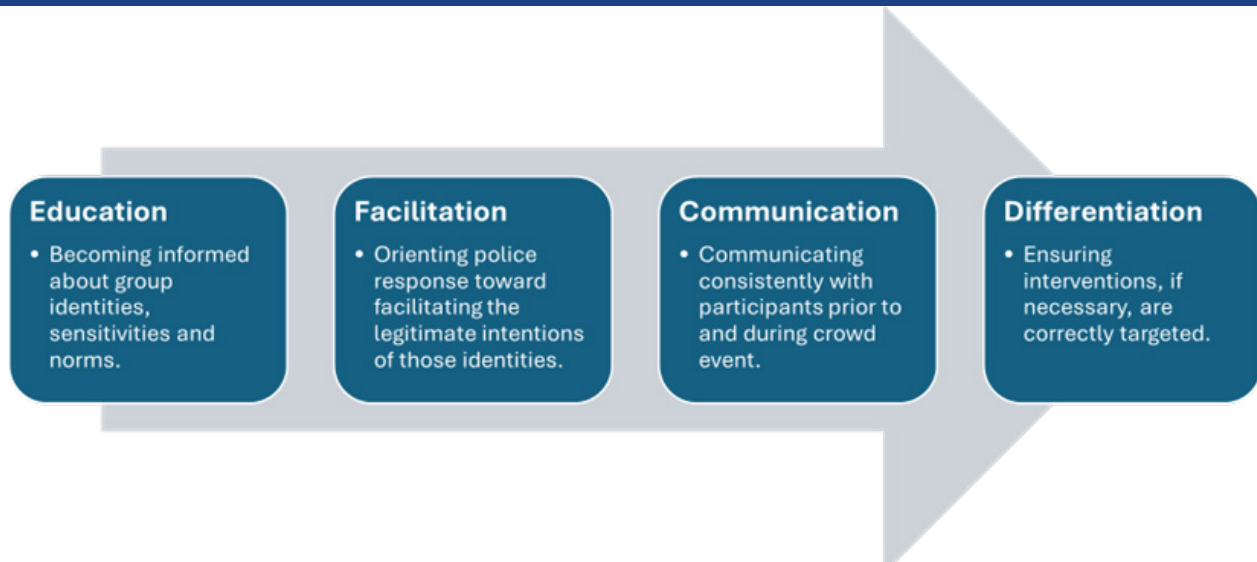
41 [Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Designates Antifa as a Domestic Terrorist Organization – The White House.](#)

42 [KUOW - Seattle police at Jan. 6 Trump rally told investigators they witnessed no violence, records show.](#)

43 Professor Stott has worked with law enforcement in Sweden, Denmark, Ukraine, Korea, the United Kingdom, and the European Union to implement dialogue policing models for public order management. Professor Stott has partnered with SPD and OIG since 2020 to implement SPD’s dialogue policing program. In 2022, Professor Stott began working with the Columbus, Ohio Police Department to develop their [Public Order and Public Safety](#) (POPS) model. In 2025, Professor Stott contracted with the Oregon’s Portland Police Bureau to develop its dialogue policing program.

Figure 3 below provides a visualization of the dialogue policing model.

**Figure 3. Dialogue Policing Model**



Panelists identified differences in POET officers' communication with counterdemonstrators, rally security liaisons, and rally attendees. POET officers frequently spoke with the MayDay USA security liaison, sharing MayDay USA intelligence with SPD leadership on-scene. After hearing the MayDay USA security liaison refer to counterdemonstrators as "transtifa," POET officers adopted the term which spread to other SPD personnel. In contrast, POET officers engaging with counterdemonstrators appeared frustrated and short-tempered. When provided with intelligence regarding MayDay USA attendees blocking counterdemonstrators from accessing park restrooms, POET minimized the concern and questioned the veracity of the claim. SPD panelists noted the restroom intelligence was false and did not require verification; for community, this assertion lacked acknowledgement of the political climate and recent legislation prohibiting transgender people from accessing restrooms. Community panelists suggested SPD implement a policy requiring officers to verify either all or none of the intelligence received to mitigate this disparity.

SPD panelists pointed to several factors limiting POET's success during this Event. POET officers

The mission of SPD in crowd settings is to protect life and property, and to safeguard democratic freedoms and support peaceful expression as guaranteed by the Constitution. Effective crowd policing reduces the likelihood of disorder in crowd events and reinforces public trust in the police.

The perceived legitimacy of police actions is a crucial factor in shaping crowd behavior and dynamics. Crowds are not inherently volatile or irrational. They are more likely to self-regulate and remain peaceful when police are perceived as legitimate by acting with fairness, restraint, and consistency. When force is used excessively or without clear justification, it can generate shared grievances, reinforce crowd solidarity against the police, and escalate conflict.

To support legitimacy, all tactical decisions must be ethically justifiable, operationally sound, and grounded in the principles of necessity, proportionality, and minimal intrusion. Crowd interventions must be flexible, adaptive, and scaled appropriately using the CMIC and live intelligence. The goal is not merely to maintain control, but to foster conditions in which crowds can safely assemble, express themselves, and ultimately manage their own behavior.

- Professor Clifford Stott, MBE

were responsible for setting up the bicycle fencing barricade but were not provided with a copy of the permit or Event map. Without proper instructions and signage, POET officers had difficulty explaining the parameters of the permit and the justification for the location of the barricade.

POET assignments are voluntary and filled by a draft system. SPD had limited advance notice and opportunity to fill the draft for this Event. Four trained POET officers volunteered. An SPD panelist believed appropriate staffing would be eight to ten officers, but the Department prioritizes officers experienced in dialogue policing over deploying inexperienced officers. Community panelists underscored the potentially positive impact of POET and encouraged SPD to prioritize assigning POET officers to demonstrations.

Panelists agreed on the importance of clear and accurate terminology, confronting assumptions about potential agitators, and supporting dialogue policing prior to and during crowd events.

## Contributing Factors

Panelists discussed factors related to the City permitting process, as well as SPD planning and initial engagement with rally attendees and counterdemonstrators. The following “contributing factors” are observations from panelists of issues that likely played a role in the negative outcomes of force, arrests, and further distrust.

### Permitting

#### Communication

- Lack of information sharing between Seattle Parks and Recreation and other City departments delayed SPD awareness of the planned rally.
- Community members were aware of MayDay USA’s planned rally and anti-transgender rhetoric prior to SPD.
- Community members contacted the local FBI field office with concerns regarding the rally. Per SPD, FBI did not share this information with SPD.
- Certain LGBTQ+ community organizations historically receive more attention, credibility, and outreach from SPD than others. The lack of effective outreach by SPD to other LGBTQ+ groups with prior knowledge of the rally limited SPD’s ability to prepare for potential tensions.

#### People and Supervision

- The SPD LGBTQ+ liaison position was unfilled at time of the Event.

#### Tactics and Procedures

- The First Amendment places limitations on the ability of Seattle Parks and Recreation and the City to deny permit applications.
- Park use permits do not capture all information necessary for SPD to plan effectively for crowd events. The permit applicant is tasked with knowing whether police resources are necessary.
- The Mayday USA park use permit application declined SPD resources because the rally would be static in the park and did not require traffic coordination.



- Seattle Parks and Recreation is not equipped to properly gather intelligence or “vet” permit applicants.

## Equipment

- The Pike Place location initially requested for the rally was deemed inappropriate due to the expected number of attendees.

## Environment

- The historic lack of trust between SPD and the LGBTQ+ community has resulted in limited engagement and establishment of a potential feedback loop wherein community can convey concerns. The significant community concern regarding the rally was not understood by SPD.
- Cal Anderson Park is a place of historic cultural significance for the LGBTQ+ community, hosting the earliest Seattle Pride festivals in the 1970s, and was renamed in 2003 in honor of Washington’s first openly gay legislator.<sup>44</sup>
- MayDay USA was viewed by residents in the Capitol Hill neighborhood as having an ideology that is destructive to the LGBTQ+ community.
- A punk rock performance, granted a permit for an area north of the pump house in Cal Anderson Park, added to the crowd size and increased noise levels.

## Planning and Engagement

### Communication

- There was limited opportunity for POET to pre-engage with community, due both to time constraints and poor or nonexistent LGBTQ+ community relationships with SPD.
- POET officers were not provided with a copy of the permit and were poorly equipped to respond to questions about permit parameters and restroom access.
- POET communication attempts with counterdemonstrators and community members focused more on compliance than engagement. Officers gave simplistic orders rather than offering instructive or explanatory information and rapidly showed frustration in conversations, reducing their legitimacy.
- Counterdemonstrators ignored POET’s initial requests to move behind the barricade.
- POET coordinated with the MayDay USA security liaison and passed intelligence to CRG, but did not acknowledge or share intelligence provided by counterdemonstrators.

### People and Supervision

- SPD had limited time to secure volunteer POET officers. Four POET officers staffed the Event; an SPD panelist identified eight to ten as ideal.
- POET officers expressed frustration and anger with counterdemonstrators when met with challenges to their authority, instead of explaining the rationale for time, place, and manner restrictions.
- SPD officers from other precincts seemingly lack understanding and familiarity with the

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44 [Park History — Cal Anderson Park](#).

cultural importance of Cal Anderson Park to the LGBTQ+ community.

- The MayDay USA security liaison informed POET the group had private, undercover security among the counterdemonstrators.

## Cultural Leadership

- SPD assumes “black bloc” and “antifa” are established, hierarchical organizations intent on inciting disorder and criminal activity.
- SPD assumptions about the “church group” prompted a low threat assessment.
- The term “transtifa” was first used by the MayDay USA security liaison then adopted by SPD and was perceived by community members as anti-transgender.

## Tactics and Procedures

- Intelligence gathered by SPD was interpreted using previously held and outdated expectations of group behavior which impacted objectivity and elevated SPD perceptions about the risk of violence and property damage by counterdemonstrators.
- The SPD Intelligence Unit assigned more weight to open-source intelligence about potential criminal activity among “antifa” and “black bloc,” but did not seek additional intelligence about the MayDay USA group.
- Per the SPOG CBA, POET is a volunteer position.
- The bicycle fencing delivery was poorly coordinated: POET placed the fencing incorrectly without the benefit of the permit map.
- CRG arrived on-scene with limited visible presence prior to the start of the Event.

## Equipment

- The amount of bicycle fencing sections provided was insufficient to separate the entire counterdemonstration zone.
- Bicycle fencing was ineffective for the sloped, grassy terrain.

## Environment

- Destructive federal efforts targeting transgender people have led to heightened insecurity about how SPD would enforce rights and protections for LGBTQ+ people in Seattle.
- SPD was unaware of the broader cultural and political context of the rally and location.
- Community members perceive CRG as aggressive and antagonistic.
- The SPD Intelligence Unit expected the presence of “antifa” and “black bloc,” heightening SPD concern about the potential for escalation and violence.
- There were conflicting understandings of the groups expected to be present. SPD perceives “antifa” and “black bloc” as violent anarchists, while community perceives anti-fascists as simply those who oppose a fascist, authoritarian government, and those who dress in “black bloc” as doing so for defensive reasons related to historic police violence.
- A permitted punk concert behind pumphouse reduced the counterdemonstration zone, pushing people toward the MayDay USA zone and increasing overall noise.

- SPD planning meeting notes identify the potential presence of a group which previously caused \$1 million in damage to University of Washington building: “Large, contentious event with high likelihood of violence.”

## Incident 1: Balloon Arrests and Escalation

### Incident Chronology

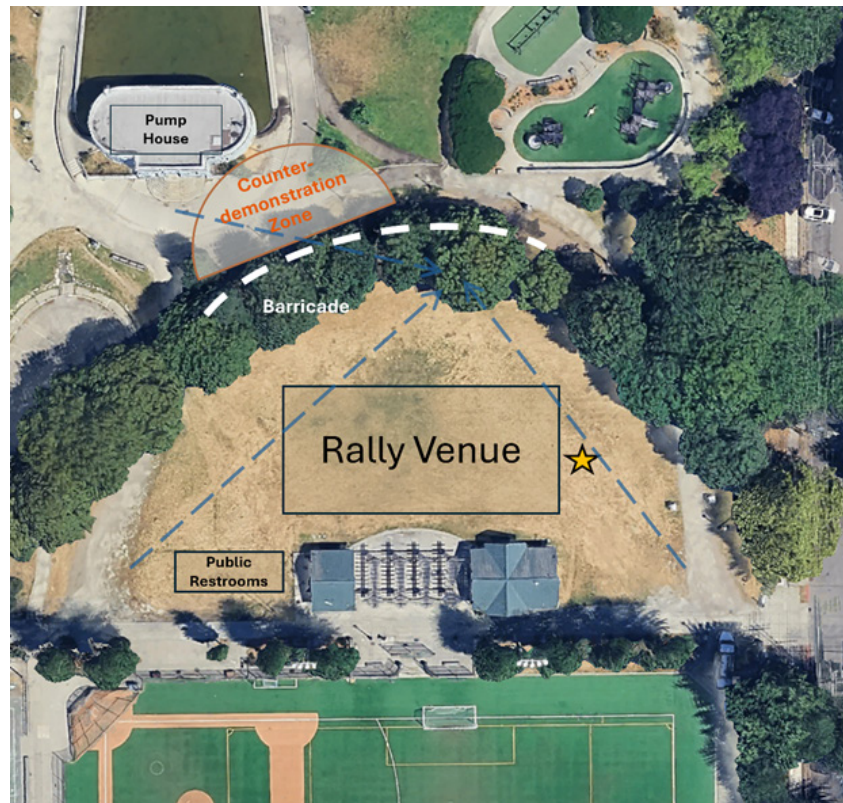
At 1:00pm, MayDay USA security alerted POET officers to the presence of “black bloc” in the park and shared information concerning the group breaking tree branches and hiding under space blankets. POET radioed the information to CRG, interpreting this to mean “black bloc” agitators were intent on provoking confrontation. CRG officers deployed into the park to maintain a visible presence by the pumphouse and on either side of the rally zone, engaging periodically with counterdemonstrators to convey expectations for the day.

At 1:30pm, a CRG officer witnessed an individual among a small group of counterdemonstrators remove three balloons from a MayDay USA structure at the southeast corner of the rally zone. The individual released the balloons into the air, and the CRG commander immediately ordered their arrest for property destruction. CRG bicycle officers pursued the suspect from the southeast into the counterdemonstration zone, where they lost the suspect in the crowd. Simultaneously, another CRG bicycle unit rode into the counterdemonstration zone from the north in pursuit of a subject alleged to have smashed a bubble maker, while a third CRG unit rode into the counterdemonstration zone from the southwest in pursuit of a third subject. The three CRG units converged in an uncoordinated manner on the counterdemonstration zone, knocking people to the ground, yelling commands, and ultimately arresting 11 counterdemonstrators.



Figure 4 below shows the location of the balloon release (orange star) and the route of the three CRG units (blue arrows).

**Figure 4. Balloon Release and CRG Deployment**



## Panel Discussion

A SPD Captain experienced in policing crowd events presented SPD crowd management policies and overarching philosophy to the panel. Panelists discussed the policies, tactics, and trainings, as well as the impact of enforcement actions on bystanders and the effects of national rhetoric on perceptions of counterdemonstrators and SPD.

## Policy, Tactics, and Training

SPD 14.090-POL Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control policy provides guidance for commanders to assess conditions of crowd events and deploy the appropriate police response “in a manner to facilitate, to the extent safe and feasible, the right to free expression and peaceable assembly.”<sup>45</sup> The Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control matrix (CMIC) is used by SPD commanders to identify individual and group behaviors in crowds that constitutes unsafe or violent conduct and to respond with the lowest level of visible presence and force necessary for de-escalation and a return to peaceable assembly. SPD policy does not define “peaceable,” or articulate the distinction between criminal conduct and First Amendment activities that include heightened emotions, anger or loud messaging without criminal or unsafe conduct. The CMIC is not static – deployment of effective, proportional policing responses returns the event to lower levels of the CMIC. Not all crowd events will proceed through all

<sup>45</sup> [14.090 - Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control - Seattle Police Department \(WA\) - PowerDMS](#).

phases, and development may not be sequential as depicted. See the CMIC in Table 1 below and the complete policy in Appendix E.

**Table 1. Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control Matrix**

	<b>Crowd Actions</b>	<b>Police Response</b>
<b>Phase 1</b> <b>(Lawful Assembly Standoff)</b>	<p>Events that are typically static or smaller in scale and do not require police assistance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speeches</li> <li>• Marches</li> <li>• Demonstrations</li> <li>• Rallies</li> <li>• Picketing</li> <li>• Public assemblies</li> <li>• Protests</li> <li>• Celebratory events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider known dynamics pertaining to the event.</li> <li>• Monitor and assess crowd behavior.</li> <li>• Assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li> <li>• Minimize police presence observable by crowd.</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 2</b> <b>(Lawful Assembly Police Interaction)</b>	<p>Likely larger and/or preplanned events with designated groups or organizers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speeches</li> <li>• Marches</li> <li>• Demonstrations</li> <li>• Rallies</li> <li>• Picketing</li> <li>• Public assemblies</li> <li>• Protests</li> <li>• Celebratory event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize POET Officers for communication with event organizers and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Engender facilitation, not confrontation.</li> <li>• Monitor and assess crowd behavior.</li> <li>• Minimize police presence observable by crowd.</li> <li>• Assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li> <li>• Develop IAP and objectives.</li> <li>• Determine appropriate level of police presence required by the totality of the circumstances.</li> </ul>

	Crowd Actions	Police Response
<b>Phase 3</b> <b>(Escalating Behavior)</b>	<p>Crowd or individuals within the crowd showing low level signs of disorder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor acts of disorder such as knocking down sandwich boards or throwing garbage in the road.</li> <li>• Individual sit-down demonstrators.</li> <li>• March deviating from pre-planned route.</li> <li>• Elements of crowd splintering or deviating from original organizer intentions.</li> <li>• Crowd becoming verbally aggressive with officers or other bystanders on scene.</li> <li>• Crowd directing negative attention towards officers or other elements of the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempt to use organizers and monitors to gain voluntary compliance.</li> <li>• Utilize POET Officers for communication with event organizers and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Use amplified sound to communicate intent or to gain compliance.</li> <li>• Use low profile tactics when possible.</li> <li>• Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 4</b> <b>(Isolated Unlawful Behavior)</b>	<p>Individual violent acts within the crowd, property damage, unpermitted traffic disruption, and defacement are not protected activities. However, isolated unlawful activity by individuals or small groups within a crowd should not automatically form the basis for declaring an assembly unlawful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolated destruction of property</li> <li>• Isolated acts of violence</li> <li>• Isolated rock or bottle throwers</li> <li>• Individual sit-down demonstrators blocking traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempt to use organizers and monitors to gain voluntary compliance.</li> <li>• Isolate, arrest, and remove law violators as quickly as possible.</li> <li>• Use amplified sound to communicate intent or to gain compliance.</li> <li>• Use low profile tactics when possible.</li> <li>• Effect necessary arrests.</li> <li>• Any force used should be reasonable, necessary, and proportional to effect necessary arrests.</li> <li>• When it is not possible to make an immediate arrest, identify and track subjects for later arrest.</li> <li>• Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li> </ul>



	Crowd Actions	Police Response
<b>Phase 5</b>  <b>(Unlawful Assembly (Riot))</b>	<p>Where unlawful behavior, such as the examples below, within or of a crowd cannot be controlled through intervention strategies, assemblies may be dispersed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violent acts by four or more persons or acts that pose an imminent threat of violence against persons or significant property damage.</li> <li>• Significant unpermitted traffic disruption that poses an imminent threat of harm to members of the assembly or the traveling public.</li> <li>• Other criminal acts in the crowd that cannot be addressed through crowd intervention strategies, due to size, intent, or nature of the acts by members of the crowd and that create an imminent threat to public safety, peace, or order.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue an order to disperse.</li> <li>• Identify dispersal routes.</li> </ul> <p>Identify appropriate area for media, legal observers, and street medics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effect necessary arrests.</li> <li>• When safe and feasible and considering the risk to officer safety and members of the crowd, force may be used to disperse the crowd or address acts of violence.</li> <li>• Less-lethal tools may only be used for crowd dispersal when there are specific facts and circumstances that there is an imminent risk of physical injury to any person or significant property damage that are occurring or are about to occur.</li> <li>• Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li> <li>• Blast balls, if authorized, and all other reasonable force options and alternatives have been exhausted.</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 6</b>  <b>(Immediate Life Safety)</b>	<p>In certain circumstances, crowd events may escalate to immediate threats to life safety that require immediate police action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crowd members throwing Molotov Cocktails.</li> <li>• Vehicle ramming attack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue an order to disperse.</li> <li>• Identify dispersal routes.</li> <li>• Any force used should be reasonable, necessary, and proportional to disperse or move a crowd.</li> <li>• Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li> <li>• Blast balls or CS Gas, if authorized, and all other reasonable force options and alternatives have been exhausted.</li> </ul>

According to SPD panelists, by 1:15pm the counterdemonstration had entered Phase 3 of the CMIC – some individuals were exhibiting destructive and criminal behavior, including ripping down MayDay USA signs and banners. SPD panelists acknowledged tearing down banners may seem innocuous but stated such behavior can indicate the potential for escalating behavior requiring police intervention. As described by an SPD panelist, current research in crowd psychology indicates two avenues for police to lose legitimacy in crowd settings: by appearing heavy-handed and excessive in enforcement of laws, or by providing expectations for behavior and not enforcing them. The MayDay USA rally was permitted until 10:00pm, leading to concern among SPD that allowing continued criminal acts so early in the day would lead to increasing criminal conduct by counterdemonstrators throughout the Event.

One counterdemonstrator ripped a banner from the MayDay USA rally zone around 1:00pm; they were not arrested for property damage because the MayDay USA security liaison did not want to





press charges. After witnessing additional acts of misdemeanor property damage, POET confirmed the MayDay USA security liaison would cooperate in the prosecution of other offenses committed by counterdemonstrators. Minutes later, SPD received reports of the balloon release and the destruction of a MayDay USA bubble maker, prompting CRG to attempt the first arrests. Panelists viewed BWV footage from several CRG officers involved in the apprehension precipitated by the balloon release. The footage showed multiple bystanders knocked to the ground by officers riding into the counterdemonstration zone, including an elderly person with a cane, volunteer medics, and several other uninvolved individuals observing the Event.

SPD crowd management policy and training instruct officers to wait to apprehend subjects until they can make a targeted arrest with a minimal footprint and without escalating the rest of the crowd. The deployment of CRG bicycle officers into the crowd to arrest the identified individuals was not consistent with that policy or training and resulted in officers striking numerous peaceful counterdemonstrators without warning or opportunity to move. SPD panelists acknowledged the convergence of officers on the crowd was escalatory and provoked anger from counterdemonstrators who perceived the actions as overhanded and illegitimate. The SPD panelists acknowledged the involved officers did not follow tactics trained by the Department and noted this scenario is now used as training for CRG officers learning crossbow and other coordinated tactics.<sup>46</sup>

## Impact on Bystanders

Community panelists described and explained the crowd's confusion as officers ordered people to "move back" while surrounding the counterdemonstration zone from all sides. The confusion and uncertainty were exacerbated by SPD engaging in multiple melees and arrests amidst the chaos of the officers riding bicycles quickly into the crowded area. Community panelists noted SPD did not articulate the justification for the arrests, leading the crowd to question their legitimacy and attempt to help people the crowd perceived to be illegitimately detained. The community panelists described a natural urge to step in when seeing peers subjected to aggression and force and asked SPD panelists to consider both how they would respond when witnessing assaults on other officers, and how SPD expects civilians to engage with officers when SPD appears to be acting outside of policy or training.

SPD panelists sought recommendations from community panelists to improve interactions with crowds while attempting to apprehend targeted suspects. Suggestions included providing more specific directions (i.e., "move south down the hill" rather than "move back"), and avoiding running bystanders over with bicycles while in pursuit of unrelated subjects. Community panelists again underscored the importance of the broader cultural context, stating perceptions about SPD culture impacted how counterdemonstrators perceived the incident.

## Perceptions

Community panelists again discussed the presence of six SPD officers at the January 6, 2020, insurrection as indicative to them of SPD views on LGBTQ+ people in Seattle. SPD panelists pushed back on the idea that these officers were representative of the Department as a whole. Community panelists felt SPD identified counterdemonstrators as a monolithic "terrorist group," which factored into their threat assessment and justified the forceful takedowns of innocent bystanders.

Panelists discussed ways to encourage constructive dialogue prior to crowd events. SPD recently

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<sup>46</sup> Crossbow is a crowd management technique used to break up crowds in which reserve officers form a column behind the main line of officers, then burst through the line to scatter the crowd.

appointed a new LGBTQ+ liaison, who community panelists suggested may be better poised to build connections between police and LGBTQ+ communities and to open lines of communication with POET and community organizers.

## Contributing Factors

Panelists discussed six categories of factors contributing to Incident 1. The following “contributing factors” are observations from panelists of issues that likely played a role in the negative outcomes of force, arrests, and further distrust.

### Communication

- Interactions with counterdemonstrators led POET and CRG to identify a potential “instigator.”
- SPD confirmed the MayDay USA security liaison would assist with the prosecution of additional crimes by counterdemonstrators.
- CRG officers encircled the crowd and ordered counterdemonstrators to “move back” without providing additional directions or a meaningful opportunity to comply in some instances.

### People and Supervision

- CRG perceived minor acts of property damage among counterdemonstrators as an indicator of likely criminal escalation, necessitating a visible deviation from a peaceful protest response posture.

### Cultural Leadership

- SPD formed an initial plan to address criminal actions by counterdemonstrators early to set the tone for acceptable behavior.
- The SPD request for the MayDay USA security liaison to assist with the prosecution for the arrest of the counterdemonstrator appeared inconsistent with SPD policy for content neutrality when policing First Amendment gatherings.

### Tactics and Procedures

- CRG attempted to remove the identified instigator immediately rather than waiting to conduct a targeted arrest at a more opportune time or location.
- Three different CRG squads attempted to detain three subjects, converging into the same area without communication or coordination.
- Counterdemonstrators perceived the speed and forcefulness of CRG’s bicycle response as disproportionate to the actions of counterdemonstrators releasing balloons (minimal property damage) and to those bystanders caught up in the ensuing conflict.

### Equipment

- CRG’s use of bicycles to push the crowd back potentially endangered and injured peaceful counterdemonstrators and bystanders.



## Environment

- There were high levels of noise contributing to communication difficulties and chaos from the rally, counterdemonstration, and punk concert.

## Incident 2: Barricade Arrests and Use of Force on the Crowd

### Incident Chronology

By 2:15pm, SPD had removed the bicycle fencing and hundreds of counterdemonstrators had gathered on the grass bank at the north end of the MayDay USA rally zone, with some encroaching into the rally area. POET officers continued unsuccessfully to ask counterdemonstrators to return to their zone, calling in additional resources after a disposable water bottle was thrown at officers. CRG and Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) officers were deployed and used batons and bicycles to push counterdemonstrators back up the grass bank.<sup>47</sup>

SPD reestablished the bicycle fencing barricade near the bottom of the grass bank in front of the counterdemonstrators. The bicycle fencing proved unstable on the sloped ground and insufficient to separate the entire perimeter of the counterdemonstration and rally zones. Officers used their bicycles to cover gaps in the barricade in some areas and counterdemonstrators largely maintained their position behind the perimeter line, even in areas without a physical barrier.

Over the next two hours, sections of the bicycle fencing fell, were pushed over, and repositioned by both counterdemonstrators and MayDay USA attendees. SPD worked to maintain the fencing and ordered the arrest of anyone who crossed the fence line. At 3:45pm, SPD arrested a counterdemonstrator for pushing over a fencing section. Several counterdemonstrators who witnessed the arrest questioned the officer's probable cause, stating the fence had fallen independently and was not pushed over. The mother of the arrested counterdemonstrator repeatedly demanded that the officers release her daughter, while pushing against a fencing section. Officers warned the mother she would be arrested if she continued to push the fence. The mother pushed the fence to the ground and retreated with the help of other counterdemonstrators before being tackled and arrested.

As this was occurring, another officer witnessed a counterdemonstrator pushing over a fencing section. Again, the counterdemonstrator retreated up the grass bank with assistance from others in the crowd, leading the officer to identify two additional arrests for obstruction. The same officer deployed OC spray at two of the identified subjects, then deployed another round of OC spray as several counterdemonstrators attempted to help them.

As officers converged to reestablish the fencing and effect the arrests, a counterdemonstrator tossed an umbrella at the feet of a CRG officer. The counterdemonstrator was arrested for assault, along with a second counterdemonstrator attempting to assist the first. CRG officers used PepperBall launchers to disperse the crowd and make the two arrests.

### Panel Discussion

Panelists discussed the placement and enforcement of the barricade, the arrests and uses of force by SPD, as well as the cultural significance of Cal Anderson and the impact of this incident on the LGBTQ+ community.

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<sup>47</sup> RDF officers perform a range of functions during events, including forming static lines to control access or providing support to CRG during active operations.

## Barricade Placement

When the barricade was reestablished on the sloping hill, the barricade became a flashpoint for counterdemonstrators and police, due largely to the physical positioning of the fencing. The fencing sections were placed somewhat precariously along the slope of the grass bank and fell easily; they were also connected, resulting in a domino effect caused by one falling section. Panelists emphasized the opportunity for POET to build legitimacy by engaging with counterdemonstrators around the parameters of the permit and the positioning of the barricade, and to articulate the reason for the barricade and encourage compliance.

## Use of Force and Arrests

Panelists discussed the decision to deploy additional officers after the water bottle was thrown. For community, deploying officers in “riot gear” was an extreme and unwarranted reaction to the actions of one person and de-legitimized the response and turned SPD into a “second enemy.” Community felt officers treated counterdemonstrators and rally attendees differently, choosing to use force and arrest counterdemonstrators while verbally asking MayDay USA attendees to move away from the barricade. The perceived differences in SPD treatment of the two groups further contributed to the shift to SPD as the new focus of the counterdemonstration.<sup>48</sup>

Panelists expressed concern regarding the arrest of the two family members. Others in the crowd questioned the arrest of the daughter, viewing it as illegitimate given the instability of the fencing. Rather than articulating the justification for the arrest, SPD engaged in a heated interaction with a mother concerned for her child. Community panelists viewed this response as unnecessarily aggressive, increasing hostility between police and counterdemonstrators. The community panelists pointed to the subsequent uses of less lethal tools and arrests of additional counterdemonstrators shortly after as further evidence of increased hostility.

Panelists reviewed and discussed an interaction captured on body-worn video from later in the afternoon. The interaction was between SPD officers saying it was time for a stronger police response due to escalating criminal conduct of counterdemonstrators. Community panelists viewed the statements and language used as inflammatory, questioning whether the statements encouraged a “mob mentality” among officers and contributed to the escalation in arrests and uses of force.

SPD panelists acknowledged the anger of community panelists. SPD panelists described the high intensity of the day and their frustration regarding the lack of support and preplanning by the City and Department. SPD panelists also noted officers had been in multiple physical confrontations and had made 16 arrests by this time and felt officers needed support from leadership in a situation that continued to be volatile. An SPD panelist who appeared in the footage apologized for the statements made and acknowledged that, in hindsight, they would have used different language. The panelist noted officers did not fully understand the cultural importance of the park and the rally and were unnecessarily focused on identifying “bad actors.” The panelist stated the panel discussions improved their understanding of the impact of this Event on community and the importance of community perceptions and context for future crowd management operations.

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48 This dynamic was also observed in Seattle’s 2020 demonstrations in response to the murder of George Floyd. Community perceived SPD as oppositional to their demands for accountability and policing reforms, redirecting and galvanizing the focus of the protest toward SPD. See: [Sentinel Event Review - OIG](#) | [seattle.gov](#).

## Impact on Community

The use of OC spray had a significant impact on the LGBTQ+ community in Seattle and furthered the distrust many have in SPD. Community panelists noted trans Black women represent the highest rate of homicide victims in the United States<sup>49</sup> and are the most disproportionately impacted by sexual assault and the criminal legal system,<sup>50</sup> leading to an inherent lack of trust in police and the carceral system. Community panelists again highlighted the relevance of the current attacks on transgender people by the federal government, expressing frustration that this national rhetoric did not factor into SPD planning or briefing for the event.

SPD panelists stated the Department's priority was to remove "bad actors" and allow both demonstrations to continue peacefully. Community members interpreted SPD posture as purposefully anti-transgender and supportive of the MayDay USA rally and messaging. SPD panelists emphasized their intention not to appear partisan, but to facilitate First Amendment activities for both groups. Panelists acknowledged SPD was not fully aware of the park's significance for LGBTQ+ communities and stressed the benefit of fostering trusting relationships between SPD and community to provide more comprehensive context in future planning.

## Contributing Factors

Panelists discussed six categories of factors contributing to Incident 2. The following "contributing factors" are observations from panelists of issues that likely played a role in the negative outcomes of force, arrests, and further distrust.

### Communication

- SPD officers did not articulate probable cause for arrests to arrestees or others, which impacted their legitimacy.
- POET officers lost patience quickly and limited engagement with counterdemonstrators.

### People and Supervision

- SPD asked MayDay USA to end the rally early due to safety concerns; MayDay USA initially declined.
- POET requested extraction by CRG when counterdemonstrators ignored orders to retreat up the hill, suggesting high risk and urgency to responding CRG officers.

### Cultural Leadership

- POET and CRG leaders conveyed to officers the expectation that counterdemonstrators would begin "doing damage at some point."
- Statements made by CRG to SPD leadership prior to reestablishing the barricade potentially encouraged a "mob mentality" and overreaction by officers.

### Tactics and Procedures

- Additional officers with batons, OC spray, and Pepperball launchers were called in to move counterdemonstrators back.

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49 [Congress - Black trans women are most at risk.](#)

50 [Black LGBTQ+ women, girls, & gender-expansive people disproportionately impacted by criminal-legal system.](#)

- A single CRG officer attempted to arrest several counterdemonstrators for knocking over fencing sections, then used OC spray to clear defensive space from counterdemonstrators attempting to prevent the arrests.

## Equipment

- Officers used batons and bicycles to push counterdemonstrators back.
- The bicycle fencing was insufficient to span the entire counterdemonstration zone; CRG used bicycles to fill gaps and extend the barricade.
- The bicycle fencing was unsuitable for a grassy, sloped location and continued to fall and be repositioned.
- CRG deployed OC spray and PepperBall launchers to prevent counterdemonstrators from trying to assist people being arrested.
- Multiple instances were identified of SPD officers not activating BWV.

## Environment

- SPD reestablished the bicycle fencing toward the bottom of grassy slope, nearer to the rally zone than the initial placement and on unstable ground.
- The organizers of the punk concert requested that counterdemonstrators remain further south of the concert, closer to the rally.

## Incident 3: Continued Protest Posture

The panel concluded prior to the review and discussion of the final incident, SPD's continued protest posture after the conclusion of the MayDay USA rally. The following section provides a timeline and description of incidents occurring between 6:00pm and 8:00pm, but no group discussion highlights.

OIG conducted a separate analysis of this incident with Professor Stott. Although that analysis does not reflect panelist views or statements, it is included in the Appendix for completeness of review. See Appendix F.

## Incident Chronology

MayDay USA initially declined requests by SPD to end the rally early, despite SPD indicating it had become unsustainable to police the event. MayDay USA organizers later agreed to end the rally three hours early. SPD requested mutual aid from other jurisdictions at 1:40pm after officers made the first 11 arrests. Washington State Patrol (WSP) troopers arrived at 6:00pm and formed a line with SPD officers between the MayDay USA stage and counterdemonstration zone.

By 6:00pm, most MayDay USA attendees had departed and rally coordinators were removing the stage and sound equipment. SPD and WSP maintained a visible presence, each with dozens of officers in the park. Dozens of counterdemonstrators also remained to protest the continued presence and posture of SPD. For the next ninety minutes, SPD was the subject of the protest.

Counterdemonstrators and police reached a standoff as each group attempted to force the other back 15 feet from the center line. SPD made two targeted arrests of counterdemonstrators for assault and used a long-range acoustic device (LRAD) to order counterdemonstrators back, announcing officers would not



turn their backs on the crowd without a space buffer. Counterdemonstrators chanted “move back” at officers on the police line and attempted to work with POET officers to end the standoff.

SPD discussed avenues to deescalate - assessing the current threat posed, the continued use of police resources, and the optics of granting counterdemonstrators a “win” by withdrawing. Counterdemonstrators spoke with POET officers, citing difficulty hearing the LRAD, and requesting that SPD issue orders using the MayDay USA sound system and begin driving prisoner processing vans and other vehicles out of the park.

The SPD Citywide Commander recommended that the CRG Commander release WSP mutual aid and continue managing the counterdemonstration with SPD resources alone. At 7:00pm, SPD began removing resources and returning to the East Precinct. The remaining foot patrol and bicycle officers moved out of the park at 7:20pm. A crowd of nearly sixty counterdemonstrators followed, gathering at the intersection of 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Pine Street before dispersing forty minutes later.

## Recommendations

The recommendations below are summarized from panel discussions over the three sessions. As described above, they do not represent consensus recommendations agreed upon by the panel, but suggestions made by panelists during discussions. OIG categorized the 24 recommendations into the following themes:

- **Community Legitimacy** – Addressing the lack of trust in SPD among various Seattle communities, as well as the equity impacts of SPD outreach and intelligence gathering processes.
- **Situational Awareness** – Acknowledging the need for SPD to change its mindset when responding to demonstrations by minimizing the belief that protesters work as a unified, oppositional group, rather than a diverse population of individuals with varying reasons for attending. SPD should also update its understanding of intelligence gathering and usage, including what “black bloc” and “antifa” signify in the current environment, and work to reduce stigma around certain viewpoints.
- **Communication** – Improving the ability of SPD to safely facilitate crowd events by intentionally building trusting relationships with a diverse set of individuals and community organizations prior to planned events.
- **Tactics** – Improving SPD crowd management tactics by prioritizing dialogue policing and targeted enforcement tactics to safely facilitate First Amendment activity.

Several of the recommendations suggested by panelists are similar to consensus recommendations made across the four waves of the Sentinel Event Review of SPD response to the 2020 protests. See footnotes for those recommendations, as well as their implementation status per an SPD memo from July 2023.

### Community Legitimacy

1. Increase pre-event engagement by establishing relationships and consistent lines of communication with community members and organizations. SPD should consider holding weekly community meetings, separate from the standard precinct advisory groups, to help familiarize officers and the Department with various community priorities and concerns.<sup>51</sup>

51 Panelists identified a similar recommendation in Wave 1 of the 2020 SER. The recommendation was accepted by SPD:

- Enable better interaction with demonstration organizers in advance of protests, SPD should build legitimacy through expanded community Policing initiatives, including the expansion of foot patrols, and build deeper personal relationships between officers and individuals throughout the communities of Seattle. (Wave 1)



2. Conduct increased outreach and engagement with various communities and organizations for improved education, trust, and relationship-building.<sup>52</sup>
  - a. Maintain strong relationships with community to ensure SPD has an evolving understanding of community concerns and cultural context.<sup>53</sup>
3. Promote intentional public dissemination of crowd management policy and education around First Amendment activities.<sup>54</sup>
4. Utilize SPD Community Service Officers (CSOs) to help with community outreach and engagement during crowd events.
5. Promote the SPD LGBTQ+ Liaison to a full-time position.
6. Attend community meetings wearing plain clothes instead of uniforms and tactical gear.
7. Ensure community perspectives are included in any demonstration review process.

## Situational Awareness

8. Provide consistent cultural and social competency trainings.
9. Expand Before the Badge training program to include the cultural histories of Seattle neighborhoods.
10. Include a brief history or context of event locations in SPD intelligence briefings and include the liaison for local communities in meetings and planning.
11. Improve SPD intelligence beyond open-source social media by working with community representatives to gain deeper understanding of cultural contexts and community concerns. Ensure equity in gathering, verifying, and sharing intelligence from opposing groups by verifying and validating information from all sources.
12. Omit assumptions about group intentions from risk assessments; assessments should instead include analysis of social atmosphere and cultural context.
13. Prohibit labeling individuals and groups as “antifa,” “black block,” or “anarchists” without articulable, relevant, and explicit definitions and evidence.
14. Confront assumptions about agitators; focus instead on differentiation and identification of individual “bad actors.”
15. Provide cultural training to officers from all precincts who may be unfamiliar with the cultural context of Capitol Hill.

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52 Panelists identified a similar recommendation in Wave 2 of the 2020 SER. The recommendation was accepted by SPD:

- Engage in direct and ongoing community dialogue to understand and adapt to the diverse community perspectives about the institution of police.

53 Panelists identified a similar recommendation in Wave 3 of the 2020 SER. The recommendation was accepted by SPD:

- SPD should require consistent cultural competency and emotional intelligence trainings for supervisors and command staff to encourage deeper understanding of the impact of individual decisions on officers and community.

54 Panelists identified a similar recommendation in Wave 1 of the 2020 SER. The recommendation was accepted by SPD and deferred to the City and Community Police Commission for collaboration:

- As set forth in OIG’s Review of the SPD Crowd Dispersal Policy and Less Lethal Weapons Report in August 2020, SPD and the City should “[p]rovide public education concerning crowd dispersal policies, procedures and overall SPD crowd management tactics.” These materials should be easily accessible and provide information that can assist residents and bystanders who may be affected by nearby deployments of crowd dispersal devices (e.g., CS gas, OC spray, or “blast balls”).

16. Provide annual crowd management, intervention, and control training for all recruits and current officers. Training should include an overview of crowd psychology and social identity theory and its importance for de-escalation.<sup>55, 56</sup>

## Communication

17. Ensure an SPD representative is included in all City event permitting processes.<sup>57</sup>
18. Improve permitting system to ensure SPD has advance knowledge of and time to plan for all permitted events.
19. When feasible, prioritize responsiveness to community requests for information, including articulation of probable cause for arrests and reasons for issuing directives or orders.<sup>58</sup>
20. Require descriptive verbiage when issuing orders for demonstrators to move back, similar to dispersal orders requiring sufficient direction and time for egress.<sup>59</sup>
21. Use signage and appropriate equipment to designate various event zones.<sup>60</sup>

## Tactics

22. Prioritize targeted arrests of agitators rather than taking actions that serve to escalate the larger crowd.<sup>61</sup>
23. Review Department policies, training, and industry best practices related to use of bicycles

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55 Panelists identified a similar recommendation in Wave 1 of the 2020 SER. The recommendation was accepted by SPD:

- Ensure that all SPD officers, not just those officers assigned to crowd facilitation teams are trained in crowd psychology, crowd facilitation, public safety procedures and tactics, and the mobilization techniques likely to be used at future crowd events.

56 In 2026, SPD is requiring Captains and below to attend mandatory crowd management training.

57 Per [SMC 15.52.010](#), the Chief of Police is a voting member of the Special Events Committee.

58 Panelists identified two similar recommendations in Wave 3 of the 2020 SER. Both were accepted by SPD:

- SPD [and the Mayor's Office] should publicly communicate rationale for decision-making during large-scale protest response to decrease mistrust on the part of the public and officers.
- SPD should ensure coordinated communication of goals so the public has a clear understanding of SPD actions.

59 Panelists identified a similar recommendation in Wave 2 of the 2020 SER. The recommendation was accepted by SPD:

- Wherever practicable, officers should inform non-compliant persons of their intention to physically touch/move them when necessary to achieve a public safety goal prior to initiating the physical contact.

60 Panelists identified a similar recommendation in Wave 1 of the 2020 SER. The recommendation was accepted by SPD:

- Communicate in advance when it plans to create barricades or restrictions to protesters or marches. The reason for the creation of such zones should be clearly articulated and driven by a public safety rationale.

61 Panelists identified a similar recommendation in Wave 1 of the 2020 SER. The recommendation was accepted by SPD:

- SPD officers should improve their situational awareness, considering the relationship of their actions to the overall strategy and tactics of the event, and the support available to the officer(s) relative to the size of the event.

for crowd management and crowd control.<sup>62</sup>

24. Clarify Phase 1 of the CMIC by changing “standoff” to “police standing off” or verbiage indicating SPD limited presence.

## Conclusion

Panelists identified 66 contributing factors and discussed 24 potential recommendations. As in the 2020 SER, discussion centered on the need for SPD to prioritize relationship and trust building with the communities it serves through consistent, equitable outreach. Nuanced understandings of community perspectives and concerns will improve the ability of SPD to conduct accurate risk assessments, reduce anticipatory defensiveness, and appropriately differentiate between individuals in crowds to conduct targeted enforcement, limiting arrests and uses of force. OIG will continue to support SPD efforts to expand dialogue policing and improved demonstration response.<sup>63</sup>

OIG is grateful to the community and SPD panelists who engaged in good faith efforts to improve police protest response in Seattle and is regretful the process concluded prior to the development of consensus contributing factors and recommendations. The connections and understandings built during the three panel sessions demonstrate the potential for building partnerships between community, SPD, and OIG to encourage constitutional, equitable, and culturally relevant public safety.

Crucial to the assessment of SPD crowd management operations for this Event is a broader understanding of the cultural context of the location and event. This context includes the historic over-policing of LGBTQ+ spaces, the history of Capitol Hill as a sanctuary neighborhood for LGBTQ+ communities in Seattle, as well as the current federal posture and climate of anti-transgender rhetoric and legislation. SPD must incorporate considerations of social identity and cultural context to effectively engage with and manage crowds. A framework rooted in social identity would allow SPD to conduct a clearer analysis of how the identity-related goals of various groups may shape crowd dynamics. Such awareness would enable more proportionate planning of resources and enhance SPD ability to de-escalate through both pre- and post-event engagement.

62 Panelists identified similar recommendations regarding bicycles in Waves 1 and 4. See below for SPD’s response to each recommendation:

- Use mobile response units (e.g., bicycle or other vehicles) that are distinct from crowd facilitation officers or “dialogue officers” to address agitators or instigators of violence in the crowd. Mobile response units should remain out of sight and in reserve unless and until they are needed and engage in ways that permit individualized attention and minimize the impact on peaceful protestors and on the event in general. (Wave 1 – accepted)
- Train bicycle officers not to arrest individuals for passive resistance techniques like “shoulder-checking” unless the officer(s) determine that the acts are clear, deliberate, and intended to substantially interfere with the ability of the officer(s) to perform his or her immediate public safety responsibilities. (Wave 2 – declined as written)
- When a crowd prevents safe movement of bikes without contacting individuals in the crowd, SPD bicycle officers should consider dismounting and walking with bikes physically placed between officers and crowd members to minimize agitation and physical contact. (Wave 1 – accepted in part)
- Evaluate the effectiveness of bicycle tactics for crowd control, especially during extended periods of sustained protest activity. (Wave 4 – accepted)
- Clarify SPD policy 8.300-POL-3 to define “bicycle pushes” as opposed to “bicycle strikes,” and the proper reporting policy for each. (Wave 4 – under consideration)
- Require reporting of all bicycle tactics resulting in contact with a member of the public. (Wave 4 – under consideration)

63 As described above, SPD holds monthly [LGBTQ Advisory Council](#) outreach meetings run by community members. These meetings offer a venue for continued dialogue between community and SPD regarding the issues and concerns highlighted during the Event and in this report.

## Appendix A. Contributing Factors

The following “contributing factors” are observations from panelists of issues that likely played a role in the negative outcomes of force, arrests, and further distrust. The 66 contributing factors discussed by the panel are organized by incident below.

### Permitting Process

#### Communication

- Lack of information sharing between Seattle Parks and Recreation and other City departments delayed SPD awareness of the planned rally.
- Community members were aware of MayDay USA’s planned rally and anti-transgender rhetoric prior to SPD intelligence.
- Community members contacted the local FBI field office with concerns regarding the rally. Per SPD, FBI did not share this information with SPD.
- Certain LGBTQ+ community organizations historically receive more attention, credibility, and outreach from SPD than others. The lack of effective outreach by SPD to other LGBTQ+ groups with prior knowledge of the rally limited SPD’s ability to prepare for potential tensions.

#### People and Supervision

- The SPD LGBTQ+ liaison position was unfilled at time of the Event.

#### Tactics and Procedures

- The First Amendment places limitations on the ability of Seattle Parks and Recreation and the City to deny permit applications. Park use permits do not capture all information necessary for SPD to plan effectively for crowd events.
- The Mayday USA park use permit application declined SPD resources because the rally would be static in the park and did not require traffic coordination.
- Seattle Parks and Recreation is not equipped to properly gather intelligence or “vet” permit applicants.

#### Equipment

- The Pike Place location initially requested for the rally was deemed inappropriate due to the expected number of attendees.

#### Environment

- The historic lack of trust between SPD and the LGBTQ+ community has resulted in limited engagement and establishment of a potential feedback loop wherein community can convey concerns. The significant community concern regarding the rally was not understood by SPD.
- Cal Anderson Park is a place of historic cultural significance for the LGBTQ+ community, hosting the earliest Seattle Pride festivals in the 1970s and renamed in honor of

Washington's first openly gay legislator in 2003.<sup>64</sup>

- MayDay USA was viewed by residents in the Capitol Hill neighborhood as having a political agenda destructive to the LGBTQ+ community.
- A punk rock performance, permitted for north of pumphouse in Cal Anderson Park, added to the crowd size and increased noise levels.

## SPD Planning and Engagement

### Communication

- There was limited opportunity for POET to pre-engage with community, due both to time constraints and poor or nonexistent community relationships with SPD.
- POET officers were not provided with a copy of the permit and were poorly equipped to respond to questions about permit parameters and restroom access.
- POET communication attempts with counterdemonstrators and community members focused more on compliance than engagement. Officers gave simplistic orders rather than offering instructive or explanatory information and rapidly showed frustration in conversations, reducing their legitimacy.
- Counterdemonstrators ignored POET's initial requests to move behind the barricade.
- POET coordinated with the MayDay USA security liaison and passed intelligence to CRG but did not acknowledge or share intelligence provided by counterdemonstrators.

### People and Supervision

- SPD had limited time to draft volunteer POET officers. Four POET officers staffed the Event; an SPD panelist identified eight to ten as ideal.
- POET officers expressed frustration and anger with counterdemonstrators when met with challenges to their authority, instead of explaining the rationale for time, place, and manner restrictions.
- SPD officers from other precincts seemingly lack understanding and familiarity with the cultural importance of Cal Anderson Park to the LGBTQ+ community.
- The MayDay USA security liaison informed POET the group had private, undercover security among the counterdemonstrators.

### Cultural Leadership

- SPD assumes "black bloc" and "antifa" are established, hierarchical organizations intent on inciting disorder and criminal activity.
- SPD assumptions about the "church group" indicated a low threat assessment.
- The term "transtifa" was first used by the MayDay USA security liaison then adopted by SPD and was perceived by community members as anti-transgender.

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64 [Park History — Cal Anderson Park](#).



## Tactics and Procedures

- Intelligence gathered by SPD was interpreted using previously held and outdated expectations of group behavior which impacted objectivity and elevated SPD perceptions about the risk of violence and property damage.
- The SPD Intelligence Unit assigned more weight to open-source intelligence about potential criminal activity among “antifa” and “black bloc” without seeking additional intelligence about the MayDay USA agenda.
- Per the SPOG CBA, POET is volunteer position.
- The bicycle fencing delivery was poorly coordinated: POET placed the fencing incorrectly without the benefit of the permit map.
- CRG arrived on-scene with limited visible presence prior to the start of the Event.

## Equipment

- The amount of bicycle fencing sections provided was insufficient to separate the entire counterdemonstration zone.
- Bicycle fencing was ineffective for the sloped, grassy terrain.

## Environment

- Federal efforts to undermine the rights of transgender people have led to heightened insecurity about how SPD would enforce rights and protections for LGBTQ+ people in Seattle.
- SPD was unaware of the broader cultural and political context of the rally and location.
- Community members perceive CRG as aggressive and antagonistic.
- The SPD Intelligence Unit expected the presence of “antifa” and “black bloc,” heightening SPD concern about the potential for escalation and violence.
- There were conflicting understandings of the groups expected to be present. SPD perceives “antifa” and “black bloc” as violent anarchists, while community perceives anti-fascists as simply those who oppose a fascist, authoritarian government, and those who dress in “black bloc” as doing so for defensive reasons related to historic police violence.
- A permitted punk concert behind pumphouse reduced the counterdemonstration area, pushing people toward the MayDay USA area and increasing noise.
- SPD planning meeting notes identify the potential presence of a group which previously caused \$1 million in damage to University of Washington building: “Large, contentious event with high likelihood of violence.”

## Incident 1: Balloon Arrests and Escalation

### Communication

- Interactions with counterdemonstrators led POET and CRG to identify a potential “instigator.”
- SPD confirmed the MayDay USA security liaison would assist with the prosecution of

additional crimes by counterdemonstrators.

- CRG officers encircled the crowd and ordered counterdemonstrators to “move back” without providing additional directions or a meaningful opportunity to comply in some instances.

## **People and Supervision**

- CRG perceived minor acts of property damage among counterdemonstrators as an indicator of likely criminal escalation, necessitating a visible deviation from a peaceful protest response posture.

## **Cultural Leadership**

- SPD formed an initial plan to address criminal actions by counterdemonstrators early to set the tone for acceptable behavior.
- SPD request for the MayDay USA security liaison to assist with the prosecution for the arrest of the counterdemonstrator appeared to interfere with SPD policy for content neutrality when policing First Amendment gatherings.

## **Tactics and Procedures**

- CRG attempted to remove the identified instigator immediately rather than waiting to conduct a targeted arrest at a more opportune time or location.
- Three different CRG squads attempted to detain three subjects, converging into same area without communication or coordination.
- Counterdemonstrators perceived the speed and forcefulness of CRG’s bicycle response as disproportionate to the actions of counterdemonstrators releasing balloons (minimal property damage) and to those bystanders caught up in the ensuing conflict.

## **Equipment**

- CRG’s use of bicycles to push the crowd back potentially endangered and injured peaceful counterdemonstrators and bystanders.

## **Environment**

- There were high levels of noise contributing to communication difficulties and chaos from the rally, counterdemonstration, and punk concert.

## **Incident 2: Barricade Arrests and Use of Force on the Crowd**

### **Communication**

- SPD officers did not articulate probable cause for arrests to arrestees or others which challenged their legitimacy.
- POET officers lost patience quickly and limited engagement with counterdemonstrators.



## People and Supervision

- SPD requested MayDay USA end the rally early due to safety concerns; MayDay USA initially declined.
- POET requested extraction by CRG when counterdemonstrators ignored orders to retreat up the hill, suggesting high risk and urgency to responding CRG officers.

## Cultural Leadership

- POET and CRG leaders conveyed to officers the expectation that counterdemonstrators would begin “doing damage at some point.”
- Statements made by CRG to SPD leadership prior to reestablishing the barricade potentially encouraged a “mob mentality” and overreaction by officers.

## Tactics and Procedures

- Additional officers were deployed with batons, OC spray, and Pepperball launchers to move counterdemonstrators back.
- A single CRG officer attempted to arrest several counterdemonstrators for knocking over fencing sections, then used OC spray to clear defensive space from counterdemonstrators attempting to prevent the arrests.

## Equipment

- Officers used batons and bicycles to push counterdemonstrators back.
- The bicycle fencing was insufficient to span the entire counterdemonstration zone; CRG used bicycles to fill gaps and extend the barricade.
- The bicycle fencing was unsuitable for a grassy, sloped location and continued to fall and be repositioned.
- CRG deployed OC spray and PepperBall launchers to prevent counterdemonstrators from trying to assist people being arrested.
- Multiple instances were identified of SPD officers not activating BWV.

## Environment

- SPD reestablished the bicycle fencing toward the bottom of grassy slope, nearer to the rally zone than the initial placement and on unstable ground.
- The organizers of the punk concert requested counterdemonstrators remain further south of the concert, closer to the rally.

## Appendix B. Panelists

Panelists are listed by role and alphabetically.

### Title

John Hollway  
Karin Martin  
Community Member (representing organization)  
Community Member (representing organization)  
Community Member (representing organization)  
Community Member (impacted)  
Community Member (impacted)  
Community Member  
Deputy Chief of Police  
Inspector General for Public Safety  
Police Lieutenant (CRG)  
Police Lieutenant (Previous CRG)  
Police Lieutenant (Investigations Bureau)  
Police Lieutenant (POET)  
Police Sergeant

### Role

Facilitator  
Facilitator  
Panelist  
Panelist  
Panelist  
Panelist  
Panelist  
Panelist  
Panelist  
Panelist  
Panelist  
Panelist  
Panelist  
Panelist



## Appendix C. Event Permit



# Permit

Seattle Parks & Recreation Event    PHONE:(206)6844080  
Scheduling                                FAX:(206) 684-4853  
300 ELLIOTT AVE W  
Suite100  
Seattle, WA, US 98119-4198

**Permit#** \_ \_ \_ \_

**Status** Approved

**Date** Apr 8, 2025 6:15 PM

**Organization Name**    Tetelestai Mnistries Inc - 6452  
**Customer Type**        General Public  
**Organization Address**    [REDACTED]  
**Agent Name**                [REDACTED]  
**System User**              [REDACTED]

**Primary Phone**    [REDACTED]

**Email**                Tetelestai Ministries Inc

**Payer**

Rental Fee	\$900.00
Discounts	\$0.00
Subtotal	\$900.00
Deposits	\$0.00
Deposit Discounts	\$0.00
Total Permit Fee	\$900.00
Total Payment	\$900.00
Refunds	\$0.00
Balance	\$0.00

## Mayday USA

1 resource(s)    1 booking(s)    **Subtotal: \$900.00**

### Booking Summary

**Cal Anderson Park: South Meadow (Event - Outdoor)**

**Center: Cal Anderson Park**

START DATE/TIME	END DATE/TIME	ATTENDEE	AMTW/OTAX
Sat, May 24, 2025 7:00 AM	Sat, May 24, 2025 10:00 PM		\$825.00
Resource level fees			\$75.00

### Custom Questions

QUESTION	ANSWER
----------	--------

Do you need an electrical hookup for your event?

No

Do you need vehicle access for your event?

No

Expected attendance?

500

How many portable restrooms will you have?	None
How many waste receptacles will you have?	1-9
Is there insurance on file?	Yes
Is this event considered first amendment activity?	No
Will money be collected onsite?	No
Will there be a bounce house at the event?	No
Will there be amplified sound at your event?	Yes

Payment and Refund					
RECEIPT #	DATE	FEE DESCRIPTION	EVENT	RESOURCE	PAYMENT / REFUND
1381855.001	May 7, 2025	ES Application Permit Fee	Mayday USA	Cal Anderson Park: South Meadow	\$75.00
1381855.001	May 7, 2025	ES Hourly Community, Natural, Special Use Rez Fee	Mayday USA	Cal Anderson Park: South Meadow	\$825.00

**Seattle Parks & Recreation Permit Holders must comply with all applicable Washington and federal laws, including but not limited to disability laws and regulations as amended, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ("ADA"); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and the Washington Law Against Discrimination, Wash. Rev. Code Ann § 49.60. Permit holders must comply with any guidelines put in place by the Governor and Public Health. Permit holders further agree to indemnify and hold harmless the City from any claims arising out of Permit holder's failure to comply with the aforesaid requirements. Failure to comply with these requirements and all permit guidelines shall constitute a material breach of this permit, and all future permitted dates are subject to cancellation.**

Refund Policy (A complete copy of Seattle Parks and Recreation's refund policy (effective 1/9/13) may be downloaded at <http://www.seattle.gov/documents/departments/parksandrecreation/policiesplanning/refundpolicy.pdf>

For community centers, swimming pools, small craft centers, outdoor spaces, sports fields, and other recreation providers, it is the policy of Seattle Parks and Recreation and the Associated Recreation Council that:

- Any person who schedules a STANDARD RENTAL of a recreation facility and who cancels at least 15 days in advance is entitled to a partial refund.
- Any person who schedules a rental of a SPECIAL AMENITY FACILITY and who cancels at least 90 days in advance is entitled to a partial refund.
- Any person who reserves a SPORTS FIELD must provide 14 days advance notice of cancellation to be entitled to a full refund.
- Exceptions: No refund is available for some designated services, which may include some rentals, outdoor events, ceremonies or picnics. Information on any specific exception is available from Parks and Recreation staff prior to payment and purchase.

X:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Seattle Parks & Recreation Event Scheduling  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

X:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Tetelestai Ministries Inc  
Customer Type: General Public  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



**Park Use Permit Attachment I & II # [REDACTED]**

**Mayday USA  
Cal Anderson Park  
[REDACTED]**

**Attachment I:**

**Supplemental Provisions**

**PLEASE NOTE: THIS PERMIT DOES NOT NEED TO BE SIGNED TO BE VALID**

*In case of event emergencies: 206-684-7250 x 2 or email [pkc\\_work\\_order\\_desk@seattle.gov](mailto:pkc_work_order_desk@seattle.gov)*

**1. Permission is Granted to:** *Conduct a community event*

- *Amplified sound is permitted for this event from 10:00 AM to 9:00 PM*
- ***Permittee must comply with noise ordinance listed below.***
- *Stages and sound equipment must be orientated facing north into the park.*
- *Amplified music must have breaks every 2-3 hours of at least 30 minutes.*
- *Setup is allowed to include: tables, chairs, generator, stage, backstage barricades and equipment for amplified sound.*
- *Electricity is not approved for this event*
- *No banners have been approved for this event. Any additional banners, displays, or surfaces that are promotional in nature will be charged at \$100 per display or surface.*
- *Food and beverages may be passed out onsite. NO Sales*
- *Approved for a worship and prayer event.*
- *Vehicles are not allowed in the park at any time.*
- *During all times, Permittee must follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws.*
- *All garbage generated by this event is the responsibility of the permit holder and must be disposed of outside the park.*
- *Any damage generated because of this event will be the responsibility of the permittee to rectify.*

**FEES & CHARGES**

**2. Payments:** Permittee agrees to pay the following fees. Checks should be made payable to **City of Seattle** and sent to Seattle Parks and Recreation, Event Management Office, 300 Elliott Ave W Suite 100, Seattle, WA 98119

*Park Use Permit Application Fee – PD*

**3. Any Sales including Entry or Admission Fees, Service charges, or Suggested Donation amounts:** Permittee shall pay the Department 10% of the gross receipts from any and all monies collected on Parks property. Checks should be made payable to **City of Seattle** and sent to the Seattle Parks and Recreation, Event Management Office, 300 Elliott Ave W Suite 100, Seattle, WA 98119. Permittee must submit a financial statement that clearly lists all income, expenses and the total amount of monies received from the event. The statement and fees are due to the Department within 10 business days following the event.

## **Park Use Permit Attachment I & II #R226990**

**Mayday USA  
Cal Anderson Park  
Briana Tokar**

### **OTHER PROVISIONS:**

4. **Food & Sales:** unless listed in above “*Permission is Granted to*”:
  - Permittee may not give away any food or beverage items.
  - This permit authorizes NO SALES of any items. Permittee may give away non-food and beverage items (e.g., sports schedules, CD’s, posters, arts & crafts, & t-shirts).
  - Permittee may have information in the park to distribute free literature concerning its programs.
5. **Canopies/Tents (Permission to setup canopies/tents must be listed in the above “*Permission is Granted to*” section:** If approved above, Permittee may set up a free-weighted tent structure (with 2 or more walls) no larger than 400 square feet (20 x 20) or a canopy (with no walls) up to 700 square feet (20 x 30) without a separate Fire Department permit if listed above. If the structure exceeds this size, it is the Permittee’s responsibility to obtain the proper permits through the Fire Department.
6. **Alcohol:**
  - Alcoholic beverages cannot be kept, sold, served or consumed in public places (RCW 66.04-010). This includes areas such as parks, parking lots and streets, or private automobiles in said places.
7. **Sound:**
  - Amplified sound is NOT authorized in the park under the terms of this permit unless listed under “*Permission is Granted to*” above. It is unlawful to use any public address system, loudspeaker or other sound-amplifying device in any park unless authorized by permit.
  - If amplified music has been approved, Permittee must be in compliance with the Seattle noise ordinance, SMC 25.08.520 (copies available upon request).
    - No amplified sound prior to 9:00 am and after 10:00 pm in any park.
8. **Equipment Set Up:** All equipment such as canopies and tents should be free-weighted and not staked into the ground.
  - Any set up requiring to be staked into the ground must be listed as pre-approved in “*Permission is Granted to*” above. All proposed staking must be done with written approval and in the presence of authorized personnel.
  - Environmental conditions affect placement of all set up on the turf. Condition of turf, weather, size and type of set up are factors in Seattle parks determining placement (if allowed) on turf areas.
  - Permittee must provide surface protection, such as plywood boards, under booths or other large set up placed on the turf or plastic tarps under food booths which may stain paving surfaces. Removal of stains and area clean up are the responsibility of the Event Sponsor. Cost incurred by the Seattle Parks for any damage done by the event will be billed to the Sponsor.

### **VEHICLE ACCESS, SECURITY, & PUBLIC SAFETY**

9. **Motorized Vehicles:**

## Park Use Permit Attachment I & II # [REDACTED]

### Mayday USA Cal Anderson Park [REDACTED]

- According to Seattle Municipal Code, other than City owned vehicles, **NO residential vehicles** or trailers are authorized to drive or park within the park boundaries at any time unless specifically allowed in “**Permission is Granted to**” above.
- If Permittee has the approval to temporarily load and unload equipment in the park, vehicles must remain in the park no longer than 15 minutes, must remain on paved paths/roads only and must not exceed a speed limit of 5 mph.
- No vehicles will be permitted to park within park boundaries or drive on the turf at any time.
- All vehicles must be parked legally in public parking spaces.

#### 10. Security on Site:

- Permittee agrees to abide by any requests by staff at the park in the performance of their duties.
- A single Lead Person must be identified to speak for the group that will be available on site during the event. **The lead person must have a copy of the permit with them at the park on the day of their event in order to render enforcement of this permit.**

#### 11. Public Access:

- All parks are open to the public at all times. No exclusive use is allowed.
- **Permittee may not close off, rope off or partition any part of the park at any time;** All park pathways, walkways, stairwells and access ways must remain open all times. **Do not block off public access.**

#### 12. ADA:

**Permittee** shall comply with all applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq. (“ADA”).

**Permittee** shall take no action that prevents, impairs or interferes with measures or conditions necessary for compliance by the City with the ADA.

**Permittee** shall not discriminate against any person because of disability, race, religion, color, sex, disability, national origin or ancestry, or age in the admission to, access to, or operations of its programs, services, or activities pertaining to the permitted event.

**Permittee** shall comply with all other applicable federal, state, and City laws, rules and regulations.

13. **Banners/Signs:** All commercial advertising must be approved in writing in advance of the actual event. Banners or signs may not be attached to trees, benches, or bushes under the terms of this permit.

#### Damage Mitigation

- A. Damage to turf, trees, shrub beds, hard surfaces or buildings caused during the event will be charged to the Permittee. All damage must be repaired to Seattle Parks and Recreation standards. It is the responsibility of the event sponsors to pay for any and all damage caused by the event. Cost incurred by the Seattle Parks for repairing damage to turf, trees or plant materials will be billed to the Permittee.
- B. Temporary fencing of some park trees, shrub beds, planters and flower planting may be required. Seattle Parks staff will determine areas that must be fenced (if any).

## Park Use Permit Attachment I & II

### Mayday USA Cal Anderson Park

#### Garbage Handling

- C. Permittee agrees to police the area and pick up all litter and debris generated by the event and its participants.

#### Recycling

- D. Recycling is now required at many events by state law. RCW 70.93.093 reads:

*In communities where there is an established curbside service and where recycling service is available to businesses, a recycling program must be provided at every official gathering and at every sports facility by the vendors who sell beverages in single-use aluminum, glass, or plastic bottles or cans. A recycling program includes provision of receptacles or reverse vending machines, and provisions to transport and recycle the collected materials. Facility managers or event coordinators may choose to work with vendors to coordinate the recycling program. The recycling receptacles or reverse vending machines must be clearly marked, and must be provided for the aluminum, glass, or plastic bottles or cans that contain the beverages sold by the vendor.*

#### SMC 21.36.086:

*Food service businesses providing food for consumption on premises using compostable or recyclable food service ware must provide conveniently located and clearly marked containers where customers may discard compostable and recyclable food service ware and must provide for the collection and delivery of these materials to appropriate processing facilities.*

Please contact Seattle Public Utilities for additional information.

## Attachment II:

### General Terms and Conditions for Special Events in Seattle Parks

1. **Retain Permit:** User must retain a copy of this permit on the premises throughout the scheduled event.
2. **Laws and Rules:** The User shall comply with all state laws, City ordinances, regulations of the Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation applicable to activities in City parks, and any lawful order of a Departmental representative made to prevent injury or damage. No lewd conduct or gambling devices are permitted on the premises.
3. **Condition of Premises:** By entering into possession, the User accepts the premises in their present condition. The User may inspect the premises at an earlier, mutually convenient time. Upon expiration or termination of the Permit, the User shall promptly return the premises in as good condition as received, reasonable wear & tear excepted, in a clean appearance, ready for use by another.
4. **Approval Required:** The following activities are NOT ALLOWED without advance written approval from Seattle Parks and Recreation: the sale of food, beverages, goods or merchandise; charging admission or fees for services; alteration, painting, or construction of any Seattle Parks structure (if applicable, see Attach. 2).

**Park Use Permit Attachment I & II # [REDACTED]**

**Mayday USA  
Cal Anderson Park  
[REDACTED]**

5. **Sales and Entry Fees:** Permittee shall pay the Department 10% of the gross receipts from all sales and entry fees. Checks should be made payable to **City of Seattle** and sent to the Seattle Parks and Recreation, Event Management Office, 300 Elliott Ave W Suite 100, Seattle, WA 98119. Permittee must submit a financial statement that clearly lists all income, expenses and the total amount of monies received from the event. The statement and fees are due to the Department within 10 business days following the event.
6. **Responsibility:** The Permittee assumes responsibility for all activities it conducts during the event, including but not limited to, supervision and control to prevent injury or damage; maintenance of the premises during the use; picking up bottles, debris and refuse; and providing security to maintain order. Seattle Parks and Recreation disclaims any liability from, and the Permittee agrees not to hold Seattle Parks and Recreation liable for, all harm that may arise from the event authorized by this permit.
7. **Departmental Access:** Seattle Parks and Recreation authorized representatives shall have free access to the premises at any and all times. Seattle Parks and Recreation may make repairs or alterations to the premises during the use period as long as the same does not unreasonably interfere with the use of the premises for the planned event. As determined by the Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation, Parks staff may interfere with the User's use of the premises for repair and alteration work resulting from an emergency.
8. **Cancellation, Relocation by Department:** Seattle Parks and Recreation may, upon giving as much advance notice to the Permittee as practical, cancel or terminate this Permit or relocate a scheduled use to a nearby available location if the premises are closed due to an Act of God, for repairs, if necessary utilities or services cannot be supplied or if a supervening order of a governmental officer or agency makes it necessary. If Seattle Parks and Recreation cancels a Permit for any of these reasons, it shall return all fees, bond or cash deposit; if Seattle Parks and Recreation terminates a Permit in progress for any of these reasons, it shall return the unused pro rata portion of fees and shall not charge expenses incurred solely for the termination for any of these reasons against the bond or cash deposit.
9. **Revocation:** Seattle Parks and Recreation may revoke a permit and/or stop a use in progress if the Permittee fails to comply with any State laws, City ordinances, including Seattle Municipal Code 25.08.520 (noise ordinance), the rules and regulations of the Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation, the terms and conditions of this permit or an approval required under Section 4; the Permittee fails to secure a necessary permit; and/or after a warning, the Permittee disregards a lawful order of an authorized representative of Seattle Parks and Recreation or engages in activity that may cause injury to the public or damage to the premises.
10. **Bond or Deposit:** A performance bond or cash deposit may be required and held in trust for performance or payment of certain charges. This may be required when an event presents a risk of damage to City Property, or if the applicant has previously held an event that violated the Seattle Parks Code. The performance bond is released if the terms and conditions of a permit are fully performed and a cash deposit is returned by check from the Finance Director's Office. If a permit is not performed fully, expenses incurred or damages sustained may be charged against the bond.
11. **No Assignment:** This permit and the permission granted may not be assigned, nor the premises sublet, without the prior written consent of the Department.
12. **Indemnity:** The Permittee shall indemnify and hold the City harmless from any and all claims, actions, losses and damages to person or property (including but not limited to attorneys fees and

## Park Use Permit Attachment I & II [REDACTED]

### Mayday USA Cal Anderson Park [REDACTED]

expenses) suffered as a consequence of or arising or resulting, directly or indirectly, from any act or omission of the Permittee on or about the premises.

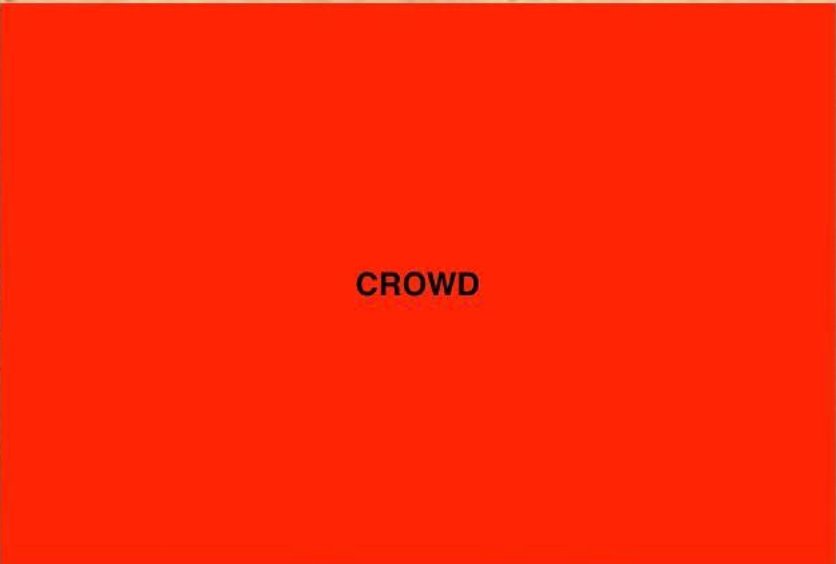
In the event that any lawsuit based upon any such claim, action, loss, damage or cost is brought against the City, the Permittee, after being notified that such lawsuit has been started, shall defend such lawsuit at no expense to the City; and if, in such lawsuit, a final judgment is rendered against the City, or against the City and the Permittee, jointly, the Permittee shall promptly satisfy such judgment.

The Permittee's liability under the indemnification agreement shall not be reduced by any City negligence; provided, that nothing shall require the Permittee to indemnify the City against the sole negligence of any City officer, employee or agent acting within the scope of such person's employment. The permit holder also waives, with respect to the City only, its immunity under RCW Title 51, Industrial Insurance of the Revised Code of Washington.

13. **Insurance:** The Permittee shall, at its sole cost, maintain continuously throughout the period of the event (including any move-in and move-out period) the following insurance during the term of the Contract:
- a) **Commercial General Liability insurance**, including premises/operations and (if applicable) Liquor Liability. The minimum limits of liability shall be \$1,000,000 each occurrence combined single limit bodily injury and property damage ("CSL").
  - b) If any vehicle is used in the conduct of the Permittee's business, **Automobile Liability insurance**, including coverage for owned, non-owned, leased or hired vehicles as necessary. The minimum limits of liability for Bodily injury and property damage shall be \$1,000,000 CSL.
  - c) The Permittee shall, if required, insure its liability for industrial injury to its employees in accordance with the provisions of Title 51 of the Revised Code of Washington. The permit holder shall be responsible for Workers' Compensation Insurance for any subcontractor it may use or hire for purposes of this permit activity. The insurance required under items (a) and (b), above, shall be endorsed to include The City of Seattle, its officers and agents as an Additional Insured on ISO form CG2026 (or equivalent), and shall not be reduced or cancelled without forty-five (45) days prior written notice to the City.
  - d) The Permittee's insurance shall be primary as respects the City, and any other insurance maintained by the City shall be excess and non-contributing with the Permittee's insurance.
  - e) No use of the premises shall be permitted until the Department receives a certificate of insurance with a copy of the additional insured provision for the CGL insurance documenting that the "City of Seattle" is an Additional Insured for primary and non-contributory limits of liability on ISO Form CG 20 26 or equivalent.

**Park Use Permits will not be issued without approved insurance.**





CROWD



STAGE

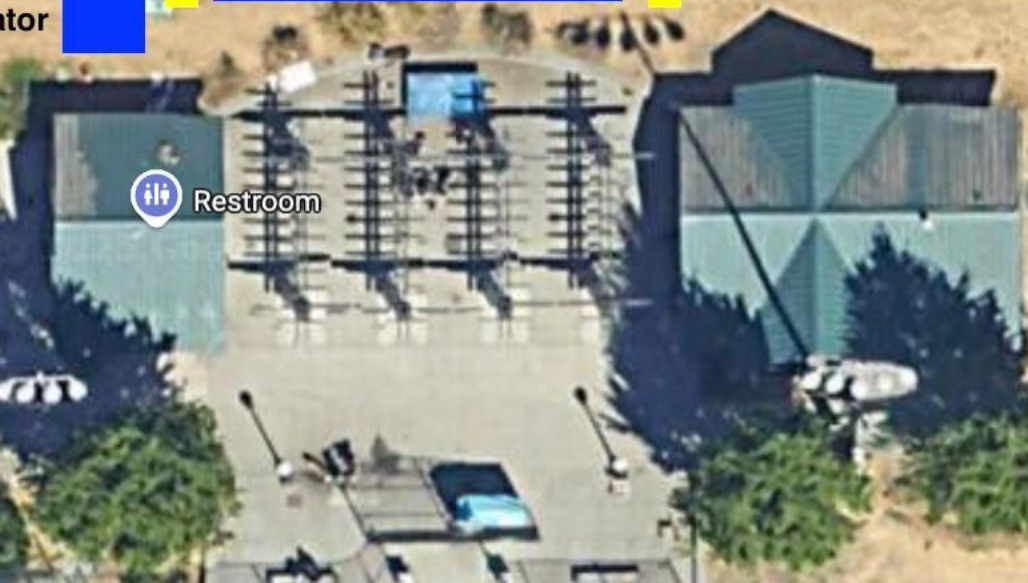
Barricades



Generator



Restroom



Cal A  
Park



## Appendix D. Event Permit





# Seattle Parks & Recreation

## OUTDOOR PARK USE PERMIT Brochure and Application

To be completed for public events in Seattle

### Event Scheduling Office

Elliott Bay Office Park  
300 Elliott Ave W, Suite 100  
Seattle, WA 98119

E-mail [parkusepermits@seattle.gov](mailto:parkusepermits@seattle.gov)

<https://www.seattle.gov/parks/rentals-and-permits/outdoor-event-permits>

### Introduction

Thank you for choosing a Seattle park for your public event. Use permits allow Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) to prevent conflicts, make necessary maintenance preparations, and avoid overuse of facilities. Note that our [website](#) includes a couple of helpful tools for run/walks, 1st Amendment, Art installs and more.

**Permits are required if any of the following apply:**

**1) Amplified sound is planned. 2) Equipment is brought into a park. 3) The event is publicly advertised. 4) Your gathering will impact normal public use of the park.**

Use permits are granted on an application review basis. To apply for a permit for an outdoor park space and/or facility, please complete digitally or download and send the application via email to: [parkusepermits@seattle.gov](mailto:parkusepermits@seattle.gov)

For other types of park amenity rentals please copy and paste this link into your browser: <https://www.seattle.gov/parks/rentals-and-permits>

### Fees and Charges

#### Application Fee

SPR charges a non-refundable Park Use Permit application fee with every permit application. The fee is \$78 unless your event is protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, in which case the processing fee is reduced to \$52.

#### Permit Fees

- \$21 to \$68 per hour Park Fee (Additional use fees, such as table or shelter fees may apply)
- \$125 for Electrical and/or Water Hook up
- \$78 Late Fee (30 or less days)
- \$104 Commercial Use Fee (see page 2 or our website)
- \$26 per vehicle Load/Unload Fee (not all parks)
- 10% of gross sales and/or \$31 per booth/canopy fees
- A damage deposit may be required for certain events
- SPR staff may be required to be on site at an event (Applicants will be advised of this if required)
- Private/Restricted access events start at \$5k per day
- Additional fees may apply

### Application

Complete the application below with detailed information. Responses provided must describe: all activities planned, facilities needed, date and time of event, and the number of attendees expected. Wherever you respond 'yes' please provide detailed explanation; attach additional pages if necessary. Unsigned and incomplete applications will be returned.

Applications are accepted for review on a rolling calendar. Starting 1st day of month, you can submit for that month the following year. We encourage all event organizers to turn in their applications early. Applications are reviewed first-come, first serve. It can take 5-15 business days to review. Once reviewed you will be notified via the email provided on your application. Late fees are assessed to events submitting less than 30 days, with the exception of 1st amendment events. Late applications may be denied or not processed if their is insufficient time. SPR may require insurance, deposits, special approvals or permits from other city departments. Additional permits may charge additional fees.

### Cancellation Policy:

Event organizer has 14 days from the receipt of event confirmation email to cancel event. Although fees are not due at time of booking, cancellation outside of the 14-day window means all applicable fees are still owed to SPR.

### Damage Mitigation

Damage to turf, trees, shrub beds, hard surfaces, buildings or other items caused during the event will be charged to organizer at SPR's current labor and material standards. All damage must be repaired to Seattle Parks and Recreation standards.

### Insurance

#### All Events Require Insurance

*Except for select 1st amendment events*

SPR Insurance is VERY specific. Accurate insurance documents can take weeks to finalize.

For specific: click on this [Link](#):

Insurance must be sent via email by organizer

## Admission, Event Fees, or Sale of Merchandise, Food, and Beverages Fee

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Any admission or sales, including services or product on SPR property, must receive prior approval. 10% of gross receipts and/or a \$31 per booth (no sales) fees must be remitted to the City within 10 days after the event date. A 'Gross Sales Report' form will be attached to your permit. A sale is considered anything that includes any financial transaction, which includes implied/suggested donations.

## Private Use and Restricted Use Fees

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Any event that restricts access to the park through ticketing or private use is subject to restricted access fees. Fees start at \$5,000. **Ask SPR staff for details**

## Commercial/Promotional/Advertising Fees

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SPR charges \$104 per surface, per day, for branded advertising in parks. Surfaces include - but are not limited to: banners, signs, tents/canopies, vehicles, inflatables and other structures that include advertising. Some structures/vehicles may be considered multiple surfaces.

## Deposit:

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**The City may require a deposit in the below situations and may incur additional fees:**

1. Event has on-site or ticketed sales; 2. Event presents a risk of damage to City property; 3. Event may pose unusual or extensive clean up; 4. Event requires special services or expenses absorbed by the City; 5. Event applicant has previously violated SPR policies and/or created any of the above conditions.
2. The deposit amount is designed to make the City whole if the terms of permit are not met.

## Approvals/Other Permits

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It is an applicant's responsibility to secure all necessary City Permits in addition to a Park Use Permit. Note: Large events, complicated park locations, or requiring services such as Police (traffic control) or events that would impact Metro may be required to complete a Citywide Special Events application. They can be reached at: 206-733-9245, [specialeventsoffice@seattle.gov](mailto:specialeventsoffice@seattle.gov); [website](#)

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**Street/Sidewalk Permits:** Contact the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) at 206-684-5098 for events that need to temporarily block or close any city street or roadway. <https://www.seattle.gov/transportation>

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**Serving/Selling Food Permits:** Contact King County Public Health at 206-296-4632 for events that include: Serving or preparing food. <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/health/environmental-health/food-safety.aspx>

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**Business Licensing Permits:** Contact Consumer Protection Division at 206-386-1267 or email [tradeshow@seattle.gov](mailto:tradeshow@seattle.gov) Engaging in business activities subject to the City's business and occupation tax, business licensing, and charging admissions or selling any items.

**Fire Permit:** Contact the Seattle Fire Department Fire Marshal's Office at 206-386-1450: if your event includes: Tents with walls exceeding 400 sq. ft, or tents without walls with an aggregate area exceeding 700 sq. ft. Use of propane or open flame. Some events may require an assembly permit (enclosed space with more than 99 people or open space with more than 499 people) <https://www.seattle.gov/fire/business-services/special-events>

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**Construction Permits:** Contact Department of Construction and Inspections, 206-684-8600: If your event includes: Building/use of a stage, platform, bleachers, and/or scaffolding structures; any structure greater than four feet in height; Structures anchoring to existing buildings or weighing more than 2,000 pounds; Any and all proposed construction must be approved by the Parks Department. <https://www.seattle.gov/sdci/permits>

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**Compost/Recycle requirements and support:** Contact Seattle Public Utilities - 206-684-3453 about: Approved types of waste management, recycling, food and beverage, approved packaging and/or the plastic ban. Reference this website: <https://www.seattle.gov/utilities/your-services/collection-and-disposal/recycling/event-recycling>

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**Traffic/Crowd Control Permits:** These will be discussed and reviewed as part of a citywide special event application and may include working with SPD or contracted 3rd party law enforcement agencies/groups.

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**Water Permits:** Contact Seattle Police Department Harbor Patrol at 206-684-4071 if your event includes/ impacts: Any activity on waterways (boat races, swim events, paddle events, and /or any other waterborne event: mooring, fireworks, barges, etc.) Harbor Patrol determines whether police staffing is required.

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**Alcohol Service/Sales permit:** Contact Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board (WSLCB) If your event includes: serving/selling alcohol: <https://lcb.wa.gov/> Please note Cannabis is Illegal in Seattle Parks.

## Noise and Sound Control

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Event noise can impact a neighborhood. Requests for amplified sound are reviewed carefully. It is unlawful to have amplified sound in a park without a permit from the Event Scheduling Office. SPR has sole discretion to allow/ limit amplified sound during a special event and set any limits it deems necessary, including but not limited to, allowing subwoofers and drums. An authorized/ credentialed city official may attend an event to measure decibel levels and has authority to require a reduction or can terminate amplified sound. Amplified sound hours are 9am-10pm Sat and Sun, 7am-10pm M-F. A noise variance may be requested, but approval is not guaranteed: <https://www.seattle.gov/sdci/permits/exemptions-from-code-requirements/noise-variances>



# Outdoor Park Use Application

Event Scheduling Office  
300 Elliott Ave S, Suite 100  
Seattle, WA 98119

[parkusepermits@seattle.gov](mailto:parkusepermits@seattle.gov)

**To be accepted:** submit application with the **required site plan** and sign. Complete application digitally in Adobe. You can also download/print. Type or print information clearly, attach maps, layouts and additional information. Please use **email** to submit your application. *You may also submit via US Mail. Note processing will take longer.*

1.APPLICANT INFORMATION			
NAME OF ORGANIZATION Hosting Event			
Street Address		City	State Zip
APPLICATION CONTACT INFO:	Name: (Main Event Contact)	SECONDARY CONTACT	Name: (Secondary Contact/Back up) ^
	Title		Title
	Main Contact Phone:Alternate Phone:		Contact Phone: Alternate phone
	Correspondence/Account Email:		Back up email account
	Address/email/phone changed? Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/>		^All Correspondence is with main event contact
DEMOGRAPHICS	Gender: Birthday:	Gender: Birthday:	
	Ethnicity:	Ethnicity:	
	Language Spoken:	Language Spoken:	
Organization/Event Website: <a href="http://www.">http://www.</a>			

2. EVENT INFORMATION						
EVENT NAME:						
PARK NAME(S) REQUESTED:		Name of Park: <b>ATTACH A DETAILED MAP - REQUIRED, SEE PAGE 4 for specifics</b>				
Please double check your dates are accurate. Add an * if date is a 2nd, 3rd, etc. option			Hours: Event Open to the Public		Expected Daily Attendance: Participants Volunteers, Staff, Spectators	
Day 1	Day of week:	Date: MM/DD/YY	Start Time:	End Time:		
Day 2	Day:	Date:	Start Time:	End Time:		
Day 3	Day:	Date:	Start Time:	End Time:		
Day 4	Day:	Date:	Start Time:	End Time:		
Day 5	Day:	Date:	Start Time:	End Time:		
Event Setup Starts: (when equipment gets placed in park)			Event Take Down Complete: (when all equipment is removed)		Total Attendance: (Add all rows & columns)	
Start Date:MM/DD/YY		Start Time:	End Date:MM/DD/YY	End Time:		

### 3. EVENT DETAILS

Has this event been produced before? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Is this an annual event? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Previous Name(s) of event:		How many years?	
Are there any changes from previous years? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Describe Changes:					
<b>EVENT TYPE:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Festival/Fair		<input type="checkbox"/> Sporting Event		Other:		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Run/Walk Event		<input type="checkbox"/> Protest/Rally				
Start Time for Run/Walk:		<input type="checkbox"/> Theatrical Performance					
Is your event ticketed? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		If yes, can anyone get a ticket? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Is \$\$ collected on site? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Is this event public? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Please check all methods by which the event is advertised: TV <input type="checkbox"/> Radio <input type="checkbox"/> Online <input type="checkbox"/> Billboards <input type="checkbox"/> Posters <input type="checkbox"/> Advance Ticket Sales <input type="checkbox"/> Other:					
<b>EVENT PURPOSE:</b>							

### 4. SITE PLAN

<b>REQUIRED:</b>	<b>Applications will <span style="color: red;">not</span> be accepted without a map. Map must be clear and legible with the following indicated:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NORTH, indicated by a directional arrow symbol.</li> <li>Name of Park facility and any impacted surrounding streets</li> <li>The overall Event Area (include parking if appropriate) inside the park.</li> <li>The location of all physical equipment being placed, included but not limited to: stage(s), vendors, booths, sponsors, tents, signs, barricades, portable toilets, vehicles, food trucks, numbered shelters.</li> <li>For runs/walk/swims, etc. must provide proposed site set up AND route.</li> <li>Any other details you think are helpful.</li> </ol>						
	<b>EQUIPMENT / SET-UP:</b> Please check all boxes and/or list numbers that apply. For more details on signs/booths copy and/or paste: <a href="https://www.seattle.gov/parks/rentals-and-permits/outdoor-event-permits">https://www.seattle.gov/parks/rentals-and-permits/outdoor-event-permits</a> . Click for Advertising Signs details						
Advertising Signs # ____ Tents/Canopies# ____ Booths w/no Sales# ____ Portable Restrooms # ____ Vehicle's Past Bollards# ____ Generator <input type="checkbox"/> Bounce Toys <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Equip. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="checkbox"/>							
Please list the outside companies/vendors that you are using for any of the checked boxes above:							
<b>EVENT SET-UP</b>		Describe the logistics/set up of your event. All items must be on map. Attach additional documents if necessary					

### 5. VENDORS/ SALES

Does your event have any on site financial transactions? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		How many Vendors?	
Serving/selling Alcohol? <input type="checkbox"/>		Will you be serving food or beverages? <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Sales: On-site registrations</b>		Services	
Merchandise		Other	
Food Truck(s):# ____		Food	
		Beverages	
<b>10% of all sales</b> (food, beverages, admissions, souvenirs, goods and services) on Parks property must be			



**Important Notice:** Seattle Parks and Recreation has **very specific** insurance requirements. We cannot permit an event without insurance. Work on this immediately after confirmation.

<b>6. AMPLIFIED SOUND/MUSIC</b>	Does your event have any amplified sound? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	What times are you requesting amplified sound? Note: Prior to 7am wkday, 9am wkend require additional permitting: Start: _____ End: _____	Is electricity requested <i>20 Amp is house-hold standard</i> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, 20 Amp _____ 50 Amp _____
<b>7. RECYCLE AND TRASH</b>	Washington State law requires vendors and organizers for festivals, sports facilities, special events, and official gatherings to provide recycling containers at events where beverages in cans and/or bottles are sold. See RCW 70.93.093 for complete language.		
<p><b>Organizer is responsible for ALL trash generated by participants and is required to provide some waste management. More waste control required for food/beverage events.</b> You can find general info and requirements here: <a href="https://www.seattle.gov/special-events-office/handbook/recycling-composting-and-waste#Packaging">https://www.seattle.gov/special-events-office/handbook/recycling-composting-and-waste#Packaging</a></p> <p>How do you plan to manage your waste?</p>			
<b>8. SPECIAL REQUESTS</b>	If you have a special request please list below. A request does not guarantee approval		
<b>9 INSURANCE</b>	Insurance covering the City of Seattle should be provided 90 days in advance, but MUST be provided to Event Scheduling Office no later than thirty (30) days prior to the start of the event. Permits will not be issued until insurance requirements have been received, verified and approved. <b>PLEASE NOTE: a significant number of initially reviewed insurance documents do not meet city standards.</b>		
<p>The City of Seattle must be listed as additional insured. The Certificate of Additional Insured must be accompanied by the policy change endorsement forms CG 20 12 or CG 20 26 or approved equivalent. Please email your proof of insurance to the Event Scheduling Office, <a href="mailto:parkusepermits@seattle.gov">parkusepermits@seattle.gov</a>. Please see our webpage: <a href="https://www.seattle.gov/parks/rentals-and-permits/outdoor-event-permits">https://www.seattle.gov/parks/rentals-and-permits/outdoor-event-permits</a> to download and review Insurance and Requirements Example. <b>Insurance must be, at least, two pages.</b></p>			
<b>10. SIGNATURE</b>	I certify that the information that I have provided on this application is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. If the event plans change, I will submit a revised application or additional information accordingly. <b>Applicants have 14 days AFTER the event confirmation email to cancel application/event.</b> Cancellations made after 14 days will be responsible for full amount of park use fees.		
<b>Applicant Signature</b>		<b>Date</b>	<b>Applicant Printed Name</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> By checking this box as an electronic signature, I agree to all the terms and conditions that may apply to the Special Event permitting process and agree that all information contained in this application is true and correct to my knowledge. All documents received by the Special Event Committee are public documents and subject to public disclosure in accordance with the Washington State Public Disclosure Act.			
<b>11. PAYMENT</b>	<p>Once you receive your Date &amp; Time Confirmation you have the following options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="http://anc.apm.activecommunities.com/seattle/home">Pay Online (Preferred) at: HTTP://anc.apm.activecommunities.com/seattle/home</a>. Click 'Sign In'</li> <li>2. Mail a check via US Mail made out to "City of Seattle" to: Elliott Bay Office Park, c/o Event Scheduling, 300 Elliott Ave W, Suite 100, Seattle, WA 98119. <b>We do not accept Certified Mail.</b></li> <li>3. <i>Schedule a time to Call with a Credit Card (all Major cards)</i></li> <li>4. <i>Schedule an In-Office Appointment.</i></li> </ol>		

# General Terms and Conditions for Special Events in Seattle Parks

**Retain Permit:** The user must retain a copy of their permit on the premises throughout the scheduled event.

**Laws and Rules:** The User shall comply with all state laws, City ordinances, regulations of the Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) applicable to activities in City parks, and any lawful order of a Departmental representative made to prevent injury or damage. No lewd conduct or gambling devices are permitted on the premises.

**Condition of Premises:** By entering into possession, the User accepts the premises in their present condition. The User may inspect the premises at an earlier, mutually convenient time. Upon expiration or termination of the Permit, the User shall promptly return the premises in as good condition as received, reasonable wear & tear excepted, in a clean appearance, ready for use by another.

**Approval Required:** The following activities are NOT ALLOWED without advance written approval from SPR: the sale of food, beverages, goods or merchandise; charging admission or fees for services; alteration, painting, or construction on any structure within a Seattle Park (if applicable).

**Responsibility:** The User assumes responsibility for all activities it conducts during the event, including but not limited to, supervision and control to prevent injury or damage; maintenance of the premises during the use; picking up bottles, debris and refuse; and providing security to maintain order. SPR disclaims any liability from, and the User agrees not to hold SPR liable for, all harm that may arise from the event authorized by this permit.

**Departmental Access:** SPR authorized representatives shall have free access to the premises at any and all times. SPR may make repairs or alterations to the premises during the use period as long as the same does not unreasonably interfere with the use of the premises for the planned event. As determined by the Superintendent. SPR staff may interfere with the User's use of the premises for repair and alteration work resulting from an emergency.

**Cancellation, Relocation by Department:** SPR may, without liability, upon giving as much advance notice to the User as practical, cancel or terminate a Permit or relocate a scheduled use to a nearby available location if the premises are closed for repairs, necessary utilities or services cannot be supplied or a supervening order of a governmental officer or agency makes it necessary.

**Revocation:** SPR may revoke a permit and/or stop a use in progress if the User fails to comply with any State laws, City ordinances, including Seattle Municipal Code 25.08.520 (noise ordinance), the rules and regulations of the Superintendent, the terms and conditions of their permit or an approval required under Section 4; the User fails to secure a necessary permit; and/or after a warning, the User disregards a lawful order of an authorized representative of SPR or engages in activity that may cause injury to the public or damage to the premises.

**No Assignment:** The permit and the permission granted may not be assigned, nor the premises sublet, without the prior written consent of SPR.

**Indemnity:** The User shall indemnify and hold the City harmless from any and all claims, actions, losses and damages to person or property (including but not limited to attorneys fees and expenses) suffered as a consequence of or arising or resulting, directly or indirectly, from any act or omission of the User on or about the premises.

In the event that any lawsuit based upon any such claim, action, loss, damage or cost is brought against the City, the User, after being notified that such lawsuit has been started, shall defend such lawsuit at no expense to the City; and if, in such lawsuit, a final judgment is rendered against the City, or against the City and the User, jointly, the User shall promptly satisfy such judgment.

The User's liability under the indemnification agreement shall not be reduced by any City negligence; provided, that nothing shall require the User to indemnify the City against the sole negligence of any City officer, employee or agent acting within the scope of such person's employment.

**Anti-Discrimination:** As a matter of policy, law, and commitment, Seattle Parks and Recreation does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, political ideology, age, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin, or presence of any sensory, mental or physical handicap. (SMC 18.12.280).

**ADA Compliance:** Where possible and within the limitations of each park site, Seattle Parks and Recreation will make accommodations for persons with disabilities upon request. For assistance call 206-684-4080 or TDD only 206-684-4950. For information or complaints concerning the Americans with Disabilities Act, please call SPR's ADA Coordinator at 206-684-4950.

## **Appeals:**

1. A precise identification of the application request.
2. A statement of the action or omission causing concern;
3. The action requested by the applicant and the reasons for supporting it, e.g., why the action is unfair or a hardship; impacts from the decision of SPR staff that the Superintendent might not otherwise know, etc.
4. Whether you are requesting a meeting or hearing with Superintendent. If so, provide address/number to be contacted;
5. If a decision is urgently needed, an indication of when a decision needs to be made. Appeals will be reviewed as quickly as possible, minimum 48 hrs. The Department's decision will be final.

## Appendix E. Interim SPD Crowd Management Policy

SPD POL-14.090 – Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control was updated June 12, 2025. The policy below was in effect on May 24, 2025.





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## Interim Policy 14.090 – Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control

**Effective Date: 04/24/2023**

### **Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control (CMIC) Strategies**

The CMIC is intended to be read as a continuum. Any police responses available at a lower phase remain available as a response at higher phases.

	Crowd Actions	Police Response
<b>Phase 1</b> <b>(Lawful Assembly Standoff)</b>	Events that are typically static or smaller in scale and do not require police assistance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speeches</li><li>• Marches</li><li>• Demonstrations</li><li>• Rallies</li><li>• Picketing</li><li>• Public assemblies</li><li>• Protests</li><li>• Celebratory events</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determine the history and risk of the group.</li><li>• Engender facilitation, not confrontation.</li><li>• Monitor and assess crowd behavior.</li><li>• Assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li><li>• Develop Incident Action Plan (IAP) and objectives.</li><li>• Minimize police presence observable by crowd.</li></ul>
<b>Phase 2</b> <b>(Lawful Assembly Police Interaction)</b>	Likely larger and/or preplanned events with designated groups or organizers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speeches</li><li>• Marches</li><li>• Demonstrations</li><li>• Rallies</li><li>• Picketing</li><li>• Public assemblies</li><li>• Protests</li><li>• Celebratory events</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Utilize POET Officers for communication with event organizers and stakeholders.</li><li>• Engender facilitation, not confrontation.</li><li>• Monitor and assess crowd behavior.</li><li>• Minimize police presence observable by crowd.</li><li>• Assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li><li>• Develop IAP and objectives.</li><li>• Determine appropriate level of police presence required by the totality of the circumstances.</li></ul>

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<p><b>Phase 3</b></p> <p><b>(Escalating Behavior)</b></p>	<p>Crowd or individuals within the crowd showing low level signs of disorder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor acts of disorder such as knocking down sandwich boards or throwing garbage in the road.</li> <li>• Individual sit-down demonstrators.</li> <li>• March deviating from pre-planned route.</li> <li>• Elements of crowd splintering or deviating from original organizer intentions.</li> <li>• Crowd becoming verbally aggressive with officers or other bystanders on scene.</li> <li>• Crowd directing negative attention towards officers or other elements of the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempt to use organizers and monitors to gain voluntary compliance.</li> <li>• Utilize POET Officers for communication with event organizers and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Use amplified sound to communicate intent or to gain compliance.</li> <li>• Use low profile tactics when possible.</li> <li>• Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase 4</b></p> <p><b>(Isolated Unlawful Behavior)</b></p>	<p>Individual violent acts within the crowd, property damage, unpermitted traffic disruption, and defacement are not protected activities. However, isolated unlawful activity by individuals or small groups within a crowd should not automatically form the basis for declaring an assembly unlawful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolated destruction of property</li> <li>• Isolated acts of violence</li> <li>• Isolated rock or bottle throwers</li> <li>• Individual sit-down demonstrators blocking traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempt to use organizers and monitors to gain voluntary compliance.</li> <li>• Isolate, arrest, and remove law violators as quickly as possible.</li> <li>• Video action of officers and law violators.</li> <li>• Use amplified sound to communicate intent or to gain compliance.</li> <li>• Use low profile tactics when possible.</li> <li>• Effect necessary arrests.</li> <li>• Any force used should be reasonable, necessary, and proportional to effect necessary arrests.</li> <li>• When it is not possible to make an immediate arrest, identify and track subjects for later arrest.</li> <li>• Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase 5</b></p> <p><b>(Unlawful Assembly (Riot))</b></p>	<p>Where unlawful behavior within or of a crowd cannot be controlled through intervention strategies, assemblies may be dispersed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violent acts by four or more persons or acts that pose an imminent threat of violence against persons or property (<a href="#">RCW 9A.84.010[1]</a>).</li> <li>• Significant unpermitted traffic disruption that poses an imminent threat of harm to members of the assembly or the traveling public.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When safe and feasible and considering the risk to officer safety and members of the crowd, force may be used to disperse the crowd or address the acts of violence.</li> <li>• Issue an order to disperse.</li> <li>• Identify dispersal routes.</li> <li>• Identify appropriate area for media and legal observers.</li> <li>• Any force used should be reasonable, necessary, and proportional to disperse or move a crowd.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Other criminal acts in the crowd that cannot be addressed through crowd intervention strategies, due to size, intent, or nature of the acts by members of the crowd.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li></ul>
<b>Phase 6 (Immediate Life Safety)</b>	<p>In certain circumstances crowd management events may escalate to immediate threats to life safety that require immediate police action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crowd members throwing Molotov Cocktails.</li><li>• Vehicle ramming attack.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Issue an order to disperse.</li><li>• Identify dispersal routes.</li><li>• CS gas, if authorized by the Mayor.</li><li>• Any force used should be reasonable, necessary, and proportional to disperse or move a crowd.</li><li>• Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li></ul>

## 14.090-POL-1 Purpose

The rights to free speech and peaceable assembly are guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article 1, § 4 and 5 of the Washington State Constitution. The Seattle Police Department (SPD) takes seriously its responsibility and commitment to support and facilitate the exercise of these rights in a fair and equitable manner, without consideration as to content or political affiliation, with as minimal a footprint as is reasonably necessary to preserve public safety and order.

This policy recognizes that assemblies in Seattle may range from small gatherings that require no police support, to permitted celebratory and/or protest marches, to large-scale, unpermitted demonstrations where activities outside of First Amendment protections, including significant traffic disruption, property destruction, and/or threats of violence may require a greater police presence.

This policy is intended to provide clear guidance to officers, supervisors, and commanders in employing appropriate crowd management, intervention, and control strategies in a manner to facilitate, to the extent safe and feasible, the right to free expression and peaceable assembly. This policy is also intended to provide guidance by which officers and supervisors may objectively determine at what juncture a demonstration or assembly leaves the realm of legal protest and becomes an abridgement on the life-safety and property rights of others. At all times, SPD's response will be based upon the conduct of those assembled, not the content of their speech or affiliation. See [RCW 9A.84.010](#).

The department recognizes that the visible appearance and/or actions of law enforcement may affect the demeanor and behavior of a crowd. It is the department's mission to de-escalate whenever safe and feasible to do so, without compromising public order and safety.



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The department also recognizes that the unlawful acts of some members of a crowd do not automatically turn an assembly from peaceable to unpeaceable. It is the department's commitment to provide officers and supervisors with crowd management and intervention strategies that allow for the peaceable expression of federal and state rights while at the same time removing individuals whose illegal behavior jeopardize the safety of lawful activity.

This policy is intended solely to guide the decisions, actions, and operations of department personnel in planning for and responding to crowd management situations within the City of Seattle. It is not intended to expand or abridge constitutional analyses with respect to the parameters of First Amendment protections and restrictions more appropriate for a court of law.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with manual sections [14.100 – Special Events](#) and Title 8 – Use of Force.

## 14.090-POL-2 Definitions

For terms not defined in this policy see manual section [8.050 - Use of Force Definitions](#). The following definitions apply throughout this policy:

**Crowd Management:** strategies and tactics that employ communication and dialogue with event leaders to obtain voluntary compliance with lawful orders and allow for minimal enforcement action.

**Crowd Intervention:** strategies and tactics that are designed to facilitate continued exercise of constitutional rights by isolating and arresting law violators within an otherwise lawful assembly.

**Crowd Control:** strategies and tactics, including dispersal, that are employed in the event a crowd or portion of a crowd becomes involved in violent or otherwise destructive behavior and which are intended to protect life, restore, and maintain order, allow for the arrest of law violators, and the protection of vital facilities and property.

**CMIC Matrix:** crowd management, intervention, and control concepts and strategies.

**De-Escalation:** strategies and tactics used by officers and commanders, when safe and feasible without compromising law enforcement priorities, that seek to minimize the likelihood of the need to use force during an incident and increase the likelihood of gaining voluntary compliance from a subject.

**Incident Commander (IC):** the sworn employee in charge of the department's on-scene response to an event.

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**Legal Observers:** individuals, usually representatives of civilian human rights agencies, who attend public demonstrations, protests, and other activities where there is a potential for conflict between those assembled and law enforcement or security.

- The following may be indicia of a legal observer: wearing a green National Lawyers' Guild (NLG) issued or authorized Legal Observer hat and/or vest (a green NLG hat and/or black vest with green labels) or wearing a blue ACLU issued or authorized legal observer vest.

**Media:** consistent with [RCW 5.68.010](#), "media" means any person who is an employee, agent, or independent contractor of any newspaper, magazine or other periodical, book publisher, news agency, wire service, radio or television station or network, cable or satellite station or network, or audio or audiovisual production company, or any entity that is in the regular business of news gathering and disseminating news or information to the public by any means, including, but not limited to, print, broadcast, photographic, mechanical, internet, or electronic distribution.

- For purposes of this policy, the following are indicia of being a member of the media: visual identification as a member of the press, such as by displaying a professional or authorized press pass or wearing a professional or authorized press badge or some distinctive clothing that identifies the wearer as a member of the press.

**Police Outreach and Engagement Team (POET):** officers integrated in the day-to-day operations of the Community Outreach and Community Response units. During critical incidents, POET officers are tasked with advising ICs and liaising with community elements involved in the event.

**Tactical Advisor:** an officer experienced and trained in special event and demonstration management who is assigned to provide tactical options to ICs during crowd management situations.

## 14.090-POL-3 The Department Uses the Incident Command System (ICS) for Crowd Management Events

### 1. When Assigned, an Incident Commander Will Plan and Oversee the Department's Response Before, During, and After an Event

The IC may delegate authority and assignments. The IC will utilize POET officers to attempt to interact with organizers and gain cooperation, when feasible.

### 2. The Incident Commander Retains Ultimate Responsibility for the Actions of Subordinates

To fulfill this obligation, the IC will be available for consultation.

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A tactical advisor is assigned to the IC, when feasible. Tactical advisors are strictly advisory, and the IC maintains ultimate responsibility for actions of subordinates.

## **3.The Incident Commander Will be the Rank of Sergeant or Above**

**Exception:** An officer can serve as IC until a sergeant responds.

If feasible, a lieutenant will assume command when there are two sergeants and/or two squads involved in the event.

If feasible, a captain will assume command when there are two lieutenants involved in the event.

(See manual section [1.020 - Chain of Command](#))

## **14.090-POL-4 Incident Commander Documentation**

The IC will follow manual sections [14.100 – Special Event Planning](#) and [8.400 – Use of Force Reporting and Investigation](#) for planning, staffing, and documenting a crowd management response.

## **14.090-POL-5 The Incident Commander Will Use the Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control Concepts Strategies (CMIC) Matrix**

Any public assembly of individuals or groups, lawful or unlawful, may require support and/or intervention by law enforcement. Depending upon the situation, the law enforcement response can range from observation and/or crowd management strategies, to crowd intervention and control strategies, as outlined in the CMIC Matrix.

The CMIC Matrix is a guide for the IC and allows for agility in police action in response to dynamic crowd events. Such considerations may include the overall positioning of a crowd, and whether it is static or mobile. The IC will document their considerations in their statement.

## **14.090-POL-6 The Incident Commander Will Employ Crowd Management Strategies Prior to and During an Event, Whenever Feasible**

The IC will consider strategies in the CMIC Matrix when planning and managing an event.

## **14.090-POL-7 Officers May Use Crowd Intervention Strategies When Safe and Feasible**

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Whenever isolated unlawful activity by individuals or small groups in an otherwise peaceable assembly can be addressed through targeted enforcement, commanders and sergeants directing a law enforcement response may use crowd intervention strategies, as provided in the CMIC Matrix, to intervene and remove law violators such that a peaceable assembly may proceed.

The effect of the crowd intervention strategies upon the demeanor of the crowd should be considered.

## **14.090-POL-8 Crowd Control and Dispersal**

### **1. The Incident Commander May Order that a Public Safety Order be Issued**

The IC may order that a public safety order be issued to move, disperse, or refrain from specified activities in the immediate vicinity upon determining that there are acts or conduct within a crowd that create a substantial risk of causing injury to persons or substantial harm to property.

The IC will not order a public safety order to be issued unless the IC has determined that the risk observed cannot be contained through crowd management or crowd intervention strategies.

### **2. Upon Determining That a Public Safety Order to Disperse is Necessary, the Incident Commander Will Ensure That There is an Avenue of Egress Sufficient to Allow the Crowd to Depart**

### **3. Where Available, Sound Amplification Equipment Will Be Used to Issue the Public Safety Order**

The IC will make reasonable effort to ensure that the order is heard or received. The IC may direct the Public Affairs unit to broadcast the public safety order on social media.

### **4. After Making a Public Safety Order, the Incident Commander Will Modulate Tactics and Strategies as Circumstances Permit**

The goal of a public safety order to disperse is to restore and maintain public order. If the IC determines that a crowd no longer poses a substantial risk of injury to persons or harm to property, the IC will re-evaluate tactics and strategies and will adjust the response as time and circumstances permit, consistent with the CMIC Matrix.

(See 14.090-TSK-3 Issuing the Order to Disperse)

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## **5. The Incident Commander Will Document the Circumstances Upon Which a Public Safety Order was Issued, Including any Considerations as to Less Restrictive Means to Restore Public Order**

### **14.090-POL-9 Use of CS Gas**

#### **1. CS Gas May Only Be Used When Necessary to Alleviate a Present Risk of Serious Harm During an Unlawful Assembly**

#### **2. Only the Mayor of Seattle May Authorize an Incident Commander to Deploy CS Gas**

Before the use of CS gas, the IC must exhaust alternatives to the use of CS gas that are available and appropriate under the circumstances (for CS gas deployment see [8.300-POL-13 CS Gas](#)).

Upon the authorization by the mayor (or next highest elected official in the mayor's absence), the IC may approve the use of CS gas to alleviate a present risk of serious harm.

Per [RCW 10.116.030](#), in the case of a riot or incident outside of the City of Seattle city limits where CS gas may be used, a sworn employee may only use CS gas after receiving authorization from the highest elected official of the jurisdiction where the CS gas is to be used.

#### **3. Upon Determining That the Use of CS Gas is Necessary, the Incident Commander Will Ensure That There is an Avenue of Egress Sufficient to Allow the Crowd to Depart**

#### **4. The IC will Issue an Announcement of Their Intent to Deploy CS Gas**

The IC will make reasonable efforts to ensure that the warning is heard or received.

The IC will allow sufficient time and space for the crowd to comply with the warning.

Where available, sound amplification equipment will be used to issue a CS gas warning.

The IC may direct the Public Affairs Unit to broadcast a CS gas warning on social media to the public.

#### **5. After Ordering the Use of CS Gas, the Incident Commander Will Modulate Tactics and Strategies as Circumstances Permit**

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The goal of the use of CS gas is to prevent serious harm and to restore and maintain public order. If the IC determines that a crowd no longer poses a risk of serious harm, the IC will re-evaluate tactics and strategies and will adjust the response as time and circumstances permit, consistent with the CMIC Matrix.

## **6. The Incident Commander Will Document the Circumstances Upon Which CS Gas Was Deployed, Including any Considerations as to Less Restrictive Means to Restore Public Order**

### **14.090–POL-10 Media and Legal Observers**

#### **1. It is the Department's Goal to Provide the Media and Legal Observers as Much Access as is Safely Possible to Assist them in their Duties and Responsibilities**

#### **2. The Incident Commander Will Consider Identifying an Area for Members of the Media and Legal Observers Outside of the Anticipated Impacted Area**

Except for spontaneously occurring events, and when practicable, the IC will consider identifying an area outside of the anticipated impacted area, but within viewing distance and audible range of the event, for members of the media or legal observers to assemble.

Nothing about this policy restricts any member of the media or legal observer to such identified areas and officers shall not take enforcement action solely because members of the media or legal observers do not remain within the identified area.

#### **3. Officers Will Not Arrest Members of the Media or Legal Observers for Failure to Disperse, Unless they are Physically Obstructing Lawful Efforts to Disperse the Crowd**

Nothing about this policy authorizes members of the media or legal observers from otherwise complying with lawful commands, nor prohibits arrests based on probable cause on other offenses.

### **14.090–POL-11 Use of Force**

It is the department's mission to facilitate crowd management events with as minimal force as is reasonably necessary to protect life and property. In both crowd intervention and crowd control situations, officers may be required to physically engage individuals who exhibit conduct ranging from obstructive to violent behavior. In these situations, officers may have to utilize force to move crowd members who do not respond to verbal orders, control violent individuals,

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or to effect an arrest. In considering strategies and tactics, officers should weigh the risk of harm resulting from officer action against the risk of harm that may otherwise continue.

This policy is to be read and applied in conjunction with Title 8 of this manual. While the department recognizes that officers will face unique and challenging circumstances that cannot be exhaustively addressed in policy, officers and commanders are expected to apply core principles of de-escalation and modulation of force when safe and feasible to do so. Nothing about this policy creates an exception to the requirement that officers may use only force, which is objectively reasonable, necessary, and proportional to bring an incident or person under control, while protecting the life and safety of all persons.

## **1. Officers May Make Individual Decisions to Use Force Consistent with Title 8**

Officers will take reasonable, necessary, and proportional actions to protect against specific imminent threats of physical harm to themselves or identifiable others or to respond to specific acts of violence or substantial destruction of property.

Officers will employ de-escalation strategies and tactics within all crowd management contexts, whenever safe and feasible under the circumstances, to reduce or eliminate the necessity to use physical force (see manual section [8.100 – De-Escalation](#)).

Where feasible, officers will consult with a supervisor prior taking action to protect against destruction of property.

## **2. The Incident Commander Has Authority to Direct the Use of Less Lethal Weapons Other Than CS Gas to Disperse the Crowd**

An immediate life safety emergency is an unplanned, dynamic situation where immediate police action is necessary to protect the officers' and/or the public's safety.

**Exception:** A supervisor may authorize the use of less lethal weapons to move or disperse a crowd if an immediate life safety emergency exists that requires this action be taken and there is insufficient time to obtain incident command approval.

(See manual section [8.300 – Use of Force Tools](#))

## **3. Only Personnel Trained to Deploy Less Lethal Weapons (Blast Balls, OC Spray, 40 mm Less Lethal Launchers, CS Gas, and Pepperballs) are Authorized to Carry and Use These Weapons Under the Supervision of the Incident Commander or Their Designee**



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Training will include information about the less lethal weapons, how to effectively deploy them, safety considerations, the specific effects on people and the environment, and how to decontaminate persons.

Only SWAT and 40mm trained CRG officers are authorized to carry and deploy 40 mm less-lethal impact rounds during crowd control operations.

## **4. Officers Will Not Deploy Less-Lethal Weapons (Blast Balls, OC Spray, 40 mm, CS Gas, and Pepperballs) to Move a Crowd Until an Incident Commander Instructs Officers to Deploy Them**

The IC will give the crowd a dispersal order and a reasonable amount of time to comply, under the circumstances.

## **5. As the Level of Violence Within a Crowd that Justified the Dispersal Order Diminishes, the Incident Commander Will Affirmatively Direct Sworn Employees to Modulate their Force**

## **6. Uses of Force that Occur During the Course of Crowd Management Are Reported, Investigated, and Reviewed in Accordance with Manual Section [8.400-POL-5](#)**

## **14.090-POL-12 Providing Medical Aid**

### **1. Officers Will Provide Aid to Subjects Exposed to OC, Blast Balls, 40 mm, Pepperballs, if Feasible, and Within Their Training**

Medical aid may include summoning medical assistance, if more appropriate.

### **2. Officers Will Request Medical Response or Assistance, When Safe and Feasible**

Officers will request medical response or assistance for subjects exposed to CS gas, OC, or pepperballs when any of the following occur:

- Subjects complain of continued effects after having been decontaminated, or
- Subjects indicate that they have a pre-existing medical condition (e.g., lung or heart ailments) that may be aggravated by OC or pepperballs, or
- Subjects who appear to have been injured by a less-lethal weapon or who complain of pain or injury from a less-lethal weapon.

## **14.090-POL-13 Debrief of Crowd Management Events of Short Duration**

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## **1. Following the Event, Sergeants and Incident Commanders Will Conduct a Day-of-Event Debrief**

Sergeants will conduct a debriefing of their assigned officers and document any observations or suggestions on an Event Debrief Form (form 23.5).

Sergeants and the Incident Command staff will then have a separate debrief to discuss the following subjects:

- Event staffing
- Deployment
- Command issues
- Communication issues
- Logistical issues
- Use of less-lethal weapons
- Areas of success
- Areas for improvement

## **2. The Incident Commander Will Complete an After-Action Report**

(See manual section [14.010 – After-Action Reports](#))

### **14.090-POL-14 Debrief of Large Scale and/or Prolonged Events**

#### **1. For Incidents Which are Large in Scale, or Whose Duration Is Multiple Days or Weeks, the Day-of-Event Debrief Will Consist of the Post-Event Briefing Form**

The IC, or their designee will complete the Post-Event Briefing Form.

#### **2. The After-Action Report Will be Written by the Chief of Police's Designee**

The completion date will be determined by the Chief depending upon the length of the on-going incident.

### **14.090-TSK-1 Incident Commander Responsibilities**

#### **Incident Commander**

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1. If feasible, **contacts** the event organizer to discuss department facilitation.
2. **Develops** contingency plan regarding staffing and tactics.
  - SPD task force callout criteria.
3. **Considers** utilizing specialty units.
4. **Reviews** mutual aid callout criteria and which tools mutual aid may bring into the City of Seattle and how they will document their use of force.
5. **Provides** a staffing plan to the SPD Budget Section based on the Staffing Matrix, if feasible.
6. **Communicates** each unit's mission to the relevant supervisor or commander.
  - **Instructs** the supervisor or commander to develop and provide plans.
  - **Approves** unit plans.
  - **Ensures** the event plans are detailed in the Incident Action Plan, to include the goals, objectives, rules of engagement, and the CMIC Matrix.
7. **Briefs** officers and supervisors using the SPD ICS briefing format.
8. **Remains** available for on-scene consultation.
9. For short duration events:
  - **Debriefs** supervisors and commanders.
  - **Collects** Event Debrief Forms from the supervisors.
  - **Considers** including the Wellness Unit.
10. For prolonged events:
  - **Coordinates** with the Chief of Police regarding the After-Action Report and **ensures** the IC or designee completes the Post Event Briefing form.
11. **Completes** an After-Action Report consistent with the requirements of manual section [14.010 – After-Action Reports](#).

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- **Routes** the After-Action Report and Event Debrief Forms to the Patrol Operations Bureau Commander, via the chain of command.

## 14.090-TSK-2 Operations Section Chief Responsibilities

### Operations Section Chief

1. **Develops** methods or tactics that will be used to accomplish the mission, as directed by the IC.
  - **Submits** plans to the IC.
2. **Debriefs** assigned officers after the incident.
3. **Documents** observations and suggestions on an Event Debrief Form (form 23.5).
  - **Submits** Event Debrief Forms to IC.
4. **Attends** separate debrief with IC.

## 14.090-TSK-3 Issuing the Order to Disperse

### Incident Commander (or designee)

Upon determining that the crowd presents an imminent risk to public safety, or that large-scale property destruction appears likely, the IC or designee, when feasible:

1. Where available, **utilizes** sound amplification equipment so the crowd can hear the dispersal order.
2. **Considers** using the Public Affairs Unit to broadcast dispersal orders on social media.
3. **Places** officers at the rear of the crowd to verify that the order to disperse will be heard by all.
4. The IC (or their designee) will **issue** the following order:

**"I am (rank and name) of the Seattle Police Department. For safety reasons and to prevent further crimes in the crowd, I am now issuing a public safety order to disperse, and I command all those assembled at (specific location) to immediately disperse, which means leave this area. If you do not leave the area, you may be arrested or subject to other police action. Other police action could include the use of chemical agents or less-lethal weapons, which may inflict significant pain or result in serious injury. If you remain in the area just**

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**described, regardless of your purpose, you will be in violation of city and state law. The following routes of dispersal are available: (routes). You have (reasonable amount of time) minutes to disperse.**

**(Repeat) The following routes of dispersal are available: (routes). You have (reasonable amount of time) minutes to disperse.**

**(Repeat) The following routes of dispersal are available: (routes). You have (reasonable amount of time) minutes to disperse.”**

5. **Provides** direction to media.
6. **Allows** a reasonable amount of time for the crowd to disperse.
7. **Repeats** the order to disperse, if feasible.
8. **Considers** issuing the order in multiple languages, where feasible, and depending upon the situation.
9. Continually **assesses** the balance of dispersal time and the goal of retaining control of the situation.

Where the IC has determined it is not safe or feasible to accomplish any of the above, the IC will document that reasoning in their statement.

## Appendix F. OIG Analysis of SPD Continued Protest Posture

The Office of Inspector General (OIG), in collaboration with a panel of community members and SPD, initiated a Sentinel Event Review (SER) of the Seattle Police Department (SPD) response to the MayDay USA rally and counterdemonstration on May 24, 2025 (referred to in this report as “the Event”).

The SER panel process was cut short due to a violation by one community panelist, and panelists were unable review the final incident, or to develop consensus contributing factors or recommendations which is the goal of the SER process.

This memo describes the interactions between SPD and counterdemonstrators after the conclusion of the MayDay USA rally and presents OIG analysis of contributing factors and suggested recommendations.<sup>65</sup> This memo is not representative of panelists’ opinions, experiences, or statements made during panel sessions.

### Introduction

On April 8, 2025, Seattle Parks and Recreation approved a permit for MayDay USA, a Christian fundamentalist movement, to hold a rally dubbed “#DontMesswithOurKids” in Cal Anderson Park on May 24, 2025. The rally was part of a five-city tour promoting anti-LGBTQ+, anti-abortion viewpoints and advocating for “the sanctity of human life [and] the sacrality of biological gender.”<sup>66</sup> Many in the community expressed concerns leading up to the Event, questioning why the City would permit the rally in the historic heart of the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>67</sup>

On June 7, 2025, OIG committed to conducting a SER of SPD planning and response to the demonstrations.<sup>68</sup> In preparation for the August 30, 2025 rally, OIG engaged with community and the Mayor’s Office to support a location change and with SPD to support improvements to operational and tactical planning.<sup>69</sup> On August 19, an agreement was reached to move the rally to Gasworks Park. The rally and counterdemonstration on August 30 remained largely peaceful - resulting in one arrest and no reported injuries, uses of force, or complaints to the Office of Police Accountability (OPA) – and highlighted the value of constructive pre-event engagement with community and City agencies.

OIG aimed to utilize the SER process to assess the Event, evaluate the various factors that contributed to the escalation into force and arrests, and develop a set of consensus recommendations designed to improve the facilitation of First Amendment rights in Seattle and to rebuild trust among SPD and community. Due to a breach of confidentiality by one panelist, the panel was unable to complete review of all SER incidents or to develop consensus contributing factors and recommendations.

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65 OIG worked with Professor Clifford Stott, an expert in crowd psychology, to conduct this analysis.

66 [MayDay USA Seattle, WA | Christians Engaged – Pray Vote Engage](#).

67 The First Amendment places limitations on the ability of Seattle Parks and Recreation and the City to deny permit applications.

68 [OIG Press Release Review of Cal Anderson May 24.pdf](#).

69 OIG published a memo on August 29, 2025 describing these efforts: [OIG SER Cal Anderson.pdf](#).

## Incident Chronology

Hundreds attended the MayDay USA rally, which included free haircuts for children, a rock concert, and proselytizing to the attendees. Hundreds of counterdemonstrators also gathered to protest the rally.<sup>70</sup> SPD used bicycle fencing to separate the rally venue and counterdemonstration area, and POET officers attempted dialogue with MayDay USA security and counterdemonstrators to keep the groups separate. Counterdemonstrators began pushing closer to the rally venue as both groups grew. Officers used batons, bicycles, oleoresin capsicum spray (OC spray, or “pepper spray”), and PepperBall launchers against counterdemonstrators to maintain the fence line and effect arrests.<sup>71</sup>

POET officers engaged with the MayDay USA security liaison consistently throughout the day. MayDay USA initially declined requests by SPD to end the rally early, despite SPD indicating it had become unsustainable to police the event. MayDay USA organizers later agreed to end the rally three hours early. SPD requested mutual aid from other jurisdictions at 1:40pm after officers effected the first 11 arrests. Washington State Patrol (WSP) troopers arrived at 6:00pm and formed a line with SPD officers between the MayDay USA stage and counterdemonstration zone.

By 6:00pm, most MayDay USA attendees had departed and rally coordinators were removing the stage and sound equipment. SPD and WSP maintained a visible presence, each with dozens of officers in the park. Dozens of counterdemonstrators also remained to protest the continued presence and posture of SPD. For the next ninety minutes, SPD was the subject of the protest.

Counterdemonstrators and police reached a standoff as each group attempted to force the other back 15 feet from the center line. SPD made two targeted arrests of counterdemonstrators for assault and used a long-range acoustic device (LRAD) to order counterdemonstrators back, announcing officers would not turn their backs on the crowd without a space buffer. Counterdemonstrators chanted “move back” at officers on the police line and attempted to work with POET officers to end the standoff.

SPD discussed avenues to deescalate - assessing the current threat posed, the continued use of police resources, and the optics of granting counterdemonstrators a “win” by withdrawing. Counterdemonstrators spoke with POET officers, citing difficulty hearing the LRAD, and requesting SPD issue orders using the MayDay USA sound system and begin driving prisoner processing vans and other vehicles out of the park.

The SPD Citywide Commander recommended that the CRG Commander release WSP mutual aid and continue managing the counterdemonstration with SPD resources alone. At 7:00pm, SPD began removing resources and returning to the East Precinct. The remaining foot patrol and bicycle officers moved out of the park at 7:20pm. A crowd of nearly sixty counterdemonstrators followed, gathering at the intersection of 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Pine Street before dispersing forty minutes later.

70 Both events – the MayDay USA rally and the gathering in response to it – were considered demonstrations by SPD. For this report, OIG uses “counterdemonstrators” to refer to the group demonstrating against the MayDay USA rally.

71 [14.090 - Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control - Seattle Police Department \(WA\) - PowerDMS](#).



## Analysis

OIG worked with Professor Clifford Stott, an expert in crowd psychology, to review the permitting process and the Event.<sup>72</sup> Professor Stott identified several aspects of SPD pre-event planning and real-time decision-making which contributed to the perceived escalation of tension and conflict between police, counterdemonstrators, and rally attendees. Two themes emerged as central in review of the final incident: SPD philosophy for crowd management and supporting community legitimacy, and SPD internal Incident Control System (ICS) for managing large-scale and emergency events.

### *Crowd Management Philosophy*

SPD mission in crowd settings is to protect life and property, and to safeguard democratic freedoms and support peaceful expression as guaranteed by the Constitution. Effective crowd policing reduces the likelihood of disorder in crowd events and reinforces public trust in the police.

The perceived legitimacy of police actions is a crucial factor in shaping crowd behavior and dynamics. Crowds are not inherently volatile or irrational. They are more likely to self-regulate and remain peaceful when police are perceived as legitimate by acting with fairness, restraint, and consistency. When force is used excessively or without clear justification, it can generate shared grievances, reinforce crowd solidarity against the police, and escalate conflict.

To support legitimacy, all tactical decisions must be ethically justifiable, operationally sound, and grounded in the principles of necessity, proportionality, and minimal intrusion. Crowd interventions must be flexible, adaptive, and scaled appropriately using the CMIC and live intelligence. The goal is not merely to maintain control, but to foster conditions in which crowds can safely assemble, express themselves, and ultimately manage their own behavior.

Effective crowd management requires a baseline understanding of group identities and intergroup dynamics to effectively facilitate First Amendment activity. Dialogue-based policing, the basis for the SPD POET program, has been implemented internationally by law enforcement agencies to support the legitimacy of crowd management operations by prioritizing education, facilitation, communication, and differentiation. Police must be knowledgeable of group identities to facilitate lawful behavior through effective communication, and must differentiate between participants to ensure targeted, proportionate responses to maintain police legitimacy.

SPD 14.090-POL Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control policy provides guidance for commanders to assess conditions of crowd events and deploy the appropriate police response “in a manner to facilitate, to the extent safe and feasible, the right to free expression and peaceable assembly.”<sup>73</sup> The Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control matrix (CMIC) is used by SPD commanders to identify individual and group behaviors in crowds that constitutes unsafe or violent conduct and to respond with the lowest level of visible presence and force necessary for de-escalation and a return to a peaceable assembly. SPD policy does not define “peaceable,” or articulate the distinction between criminal conduct and First Amendment activities that include heightened emotions, anger or loud messaging without criminal or unsafe conduct. The CMIC is not static – deployment of effective, proportional policing

72 Professor Clifford Stott MBE is a globally recognized scholar of crowd psychology, collective behavior, and public order. He is Professor of Policing and Research and Academic Director for the Centre for Policing Research and Learning at the Open University in the United Kingdom. Professor Stott’s work has transformed international understanding of riots, protest, football disorder, and the governance of public space. See: [Centre for Policing Research and Learning](#).

73 [14.090 - Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control - Seattle Police Department \(WA\) - PowerDMS](#).

responses returns the event to lower levels of the CMIC. Not all events will proceed through all phases, and development may not be sequential as depicted. See the CMIC in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control Matrix**

	<b>Crowd Actions</b>	<b>Police Response</b>
<b>Phase 1</b>  <b>(Lawful Assembly (Standoff))</b>	Events that are typically static or smaller in scale and do not require police assistance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speeches</li> <li>• Marches</li> <li>• Demonstrations</li> <li>• Rallies</li> <li>• Picketing</li> <li>• Public assemblies</li> <li>• Protests</li> <li>• Celebratory events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider known dynamics pertaining to the event.</li> <li>• Monitor and assess crowd behavior.</li> <li>• Assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li> <li>• Minimize police presence observable by crowd.</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 2</b>  <b>(Lawful Assembly (Police Interaction))</b>	Likely larger and/or preplanned events with designated groups or organizers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speeches</li> <li>• Marches</li> <li>• Demonstrations</li> <li>• Rallies</li> <li>• Picketing</li> <li>• Public assemblies</li> <li>• Protests</li> <li>• Celebratory event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize POET Officers for communication with event organizers and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Engender facilitation, not confrontation.</li> <li>• Monitor and assess crowd behavior.</li> <li>• Minimize police presence observable by crowd.</li> <li>• Assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li> <li>• Develop IAP and objectives.</li> <li>• Determine appropriate level of police presence required by the totality of the circumstances.</li> </ul>

	Crowd Actions	Police Response
<b>Phase 3</b> <b>(Escalating Behavior)</b>	<p>Crowd or individuals within the crowd showing low level signs of disorder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor acts of disorder such as knocking down sandwich boards or throwing garbage in the road.</li> <li>• Individual sit-down demonstrators.</li> <li>• March deviating from pre-planned route.</li> <li>• Elements of crowd splintering or deviating from original organizer intentions.</li> <li>• Crowd becoming verbally aggressive with officers or other bystanders on scene.</li> <li>• Crowd directing negative attention towards officers or other elements of the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempt to use organizers and monitors to gain voluntary compliance.</li> <li>• Utilize POET Officers for communication with event organizers and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Use amplified sound to communicate intent or to gain compliance.</li> <li>• Use low profile tactics when possible.</li> <li>• Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 4</b> <b>(Isolated Unlawful Behavior)</b>	<p>Individual violent acts within the crowd, property damage, unpermitted traffic disruption, and defacement are not protected activities. However, isolated unlawful activity by individuals or small groups within a crowd should not automatically form the basis for declaring an assembly unlawful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolated destruction of property</li> <li>• Isolated acts of violence</li> <li>• Isolated rock or bottle throwers</li> <li>• Individual sit-down demonstrators blocking traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempt to use organizers and monitors to gain voluntary compliance.</li> <li>• Isolate, arrest, and remove law violators as quickly as possible.</li> <li>• Use amplified sound to communicate intent or to gain compliance.</li> <li>• Use low profile tactics when possible.</li> <li>• Effect necessary arrests.</li> <li>• Any force used should be reasonable, necessary, and proportional to effect necessary arrests.</li> <li>• When it is not possible to make an immediate arrest, identify and track subjects for later arrest.</li> <li>• Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li> </ul>

	Crowd Actions	Police Response
<b>Phase 5</b> <b>(Unlawful Assembly (Riot))</b>	<p>Where unlawful behavior, such as the examples below, within or of a crowd cannot be controlled through intervention strategies, assemblies may be dispersed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violent acts by four or more persons or acts that pose an imminent threat of violence against persons or significant property damage.</li> <li>• Significant unpermitted traffic disruption that poses an imminent threat of harm to members of the assembly or the traveling public.</li> <li>• Other criminal acts in the crowd that cannot be addressed through crowd intervention strategies, due to size, intent, or nature of the acts by members of the crowd and that create an imminent threat to public safety, peace, or order.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue an order to disperse.</li> <li>• Identify dispersal routes.</li> </ul> <p>Identify appropriate area for media, legal observers, and street medics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effect necessary arrests.</li> <li>• When safe and feasible and considering the risk to officer safety and members of the crowd, force may be used to disperse the crowd or address acts of violence.</li> <li>• Less-lethal tools may only be used for crowd dispersal when there are specific facts and circumstances that there is an imminent risk of physical injury to any person or significant property damage that are occurring or are about to occur.</li> <li>• Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li> <li>• Blast balls, if authorized, and all other reasonable force options and alternatives have been exhausted.</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 6</b> <b>(Immediate Life Safety)</b>	<p>In certain circumstances, crowd events may escalate to immediate threats to life safety that require immediate police action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crowd members throwing Molotov Cocktails.</li> <li>• Vehicle ramming attack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue an order to disperse.</li> <li>• Identify dispersal routes.</li> <li>• Any force used should be reasonable, necessary, and proportional to disperse or move a crowd.</li> <li>• Continue to assess and modulate response as behavior changes.</li> <li>• Blast balls or CS Gas, if authorized, and all other reasonable force options and alternatives have been exhausted.</li> </ul>

POET deployed four officers on the morning of the Event to begin engagement with the different groups expected to be in the park. Despite established relationships with several organizers, POET officers were unable to facilitate productive conversations with counterdemonstrators or between counterdemonstrators and MayDay USA. Conversely, the POET Commander worked closely with the MayDay USA security liaison to share intelligence and engaged positively with rally attendees. The optics of this discrepancy contributed to the growing solidarity of counterdemonstrators who perceived SPD as unjust and illegitimate in its protection of the anti-LGBTQ+ rally.

OIG observed this solidarity strengthening over the course of the day as SPD continued to direct enforcement actions against counterdemonstrators. An identifiable shift occurred around 3:00pm following the reestablishment of the barricade on the hillside, wherein the focus of counterdemonstrators changed from the MayDay USA rally to SPD. Community members with varying reasons for attending the

demonstration, varying perspectives on protest tactics, and varying considerations related to potential arrest and prosecution, united to challenge the continued presence of SPD in the park. This social cohesion and shared objectives of counterdemonstrators is particularly evident in their unified demand for SPD to retreat 15 feet out of the park.

Crucial to the assessment of SPD crowd management operations for this Event is a broader understanding of the cultural context of the location and event. This context includes the historic over-policing of LGBTQ+ spaces, the history of Capitol Hill as a sanctuary neighborhood for LGBTQ+ communities in Seattle, as well as the current federal climate of anti-transgender rhetoric and legislation. SPD must incorporate considerations of social identity and cultural context to effectively engage with and manage crowds. A framework rooted in social identity would allow SPD to conduct a clearer analysis of how the identity-related goals of various groups may shape crowd dynamics. Such awareness would enable more proportionate planning of resources and enhance SPD ability to de-escalate through both pre- and post-event engagement.

### *Incident Command System*

SPD utilizes an Incident Command System (ICS) for managing large-scale events and emergency response. Part of the National Incident Management System, the ICS is a standardized approach to the command, control, and coordination of emergency response across agencies.<sup>74</sup> The ICS distinguishes strategic, tactical, and operational responsibilities, enabling coordination across multiple units, ensuring alignment with departmental priorities, and supporting a lawful and proportionate policing response.

**Strategic Command.** The Citywide Commander defines the strategic intent for SPD approach to a crowd event and sets priorities for the Department. The role of the Citywide Commander is to support, advise, and help coordinate across SPD and with external stakeholders, ensuring that tactical decisions remain aligned with the strategic goals and political context of the Department.

**Tactical Command.** The Incident Commander (IC) leads the tactical response. The IC is responsible for translating the Citywide Commander's strategic intent into proportionate and lawful deployments, including decisions about posture, tactics, and the use of specialist resources or taskforces.

**Operational Command.** The Operations Section Chief (OC) is the IC's principal tactical partner, providing operational insight, coordinating frontline units, and ensuring the safe and effective deployment of resources.

**Unit Command.** Unit commanders are responsible for leading specialty teams on-scene, providing live intelligence to support dynamic risk assessments and the deployment of proportionate police responses per the direction of the OC. SPD deploys its Community Response Group (CRG)<sup>75</sup> and Police Outreach and Engagement Team (POET)<sup>76</sup> for most planned crowd events, each led by a commander. The CRG Commander acts as the OC's strategic advisor and is supported by the POET Commander in assessing the tone and tenor of event participants.

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74 <https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/assets/ics%20organizational%20structure%20and%20elements.pdf>.

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SPD assigned a deputy chief as the Citywide Commander, a captain as the IC, and lieutenants as the OC, CRG and POET Commanders for the Event. OIG and Professor Stott observed deference to the CRG Commander by other SPD leadership throughout the day. The CRG Commander provided live intelligence to the OC as outlined in the ICS, yet made tactical decisions without explicit approval through the ICS chain of command. Such decisions included classifying the level of disorder necessary to begin effecting arrests without tactical direction from the IC and ordering the deployment of specialty task forces without direction from the OC.

SPD and WSP remained in the park while organizers removed tents and equipment after the MayDay USA rally ended. Body-worn video (BWV) shows the OC questioning the justification for continued police presence in the park and the need to protect the concluded rally. The CRG Commander articulated two concerns: 1) the potential for assaults on MayDay USA attendees by counterdemonstrators; and 2) the risk that counterdemonstrators would follow police out of the park, potentially engaging in escalatory behaviors and requiring additional police intervention. Without receiving direction from the OC, the CRG Commander ordered a police line to push counterdemonstrators back.

BWV shows the Citywide Commander expressing concern SPD would become the new subject of the protest and requesting the CRG Commander release WSP mutual aid to reduce visible police presence in the park. This decision appears to have been made without consultation with the IC regarding tactics and posture, or with the OC to coordinate the withdrawal. While the Citywide Commander is responsible for defining the Department's overarching strategic intent for crowd events, the IC and OC are responsible for assessing conditions and deploying the appropriate resources in alignment with the Citywide Commander's strategic intent. Eliminating the IC and OC from key decision-making discussions may reduce perceived legitimacy in police if deployments are viewed as unjustified or excessive, and increases the risk of police becoming the focus of the demonstration.

Adherence to the ICS chain of command lessens the risk of disproportionate deployments, and centers the Department's strategic intent for crowd events, thereby reinforcing police legitimacy and the protection of Constitutional rights.

## Conclusion

This report presented OIG analysis, in partnership with Professor Stott, of SPD continued protest posture after the conclusion of the MayDay USA rally. The findings and observations included in this report are OIG and Professor Stott's, and do not reflect panelists' views or conversations. OIG will continue working with Professor Stott to support SPD crowd management efforts, prioritizing consistent engagement with Seattle communities to more effectively assess intergroup dynamics and potential for crowd escalation. OIG and Professor Stott will also continue to evaluate the SPD use of the Incident Command System and the responsibilities of the chain of command.

## *Contributing Factors Identified by OIG*

### Communication

- SPD and counterdemonstrators both requested the other group move back 15 feet.
- Counterdemonstrators expressed difficulty hearing the LRAD announcements.

### People and Supervision

- Washington State Patrol provided mutual aid officers.



- SPD Operations Chief asked CRG what SPD was defending in park after the conclusion of the MayDay USA rally.
- SPD Citywide Commander expressed concern SPD would become the “focus” of counterdemonstration by remaining in the park.

### **Cultural Leadership**

- SPD expressed concern that counterdemonstrators would get a “win” if SPD left the park before counterdemonstrators.
- The Citywide Commander, Incident Commander and Operations Chief deferred to the CRG Commander for tactical decision-making.

### **Tactics and Procedures**

- SPD was concerned that counterdemonstrators would follow officers out of park if SPD returned to the precinct.

### **Equipment**

- SPD was concerned that the removal of officers, bicycles, and vehicles would result in counterdemonstrators filling the space, potentially endangering officers.

### **Environment**

- POET officers were not at the location of the 15-foot dispute.
- SPD became the new focus of the counterdemonstration.

### *Recommendations*

1. Incorporate social identity–based analysis to better anticipate how protest group identities interact with space and symbolism, and how these factors shape mobilization dynamics.
2. Conduct training for Lieutenants, Captains, and Chiefs about the ICS and roles they may be assigned to.

