

# SEATTLE PARK DISTRICT

# 2021 Report to the Community



**SEATTLE**  
**PARK DISTRICT**  
INVESTING IN PEOPLE & PARKS



Seattle  
Parks & Recreation

## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



### DEAR PARKS AND RECREATION SUPPORTER:

I am pleased to present the 2021 Seattle Park District Annual Report, a summary of Park District finances and operations, along with highlights of accomplishments.

2021 was another busy and productive year. We worked diligently to complete commitments established in the first six-year cycle of the Park District, even as we continued to feel the impacts of the second year of the pandemic. As in 2020, we provided a number of “essential services” to the public in our COVID response such as shower and hygiene services for people experiencing homelessness, childcare for frontline workers, and public sites for COVID testing and vaccinations. COVID restrictions continued to affect the delivery of capital projects and the availability and operations of our facilities and programs.

The lingering pandemic also caused us to pause planning for the next Park District funding cycle, which had begun in 2019 with the development of our Strategic Plan. In 2021, Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) sought to reengage with communities we serve about how their needs had shifted to help shape our short-term budget priorities and operations. To support responses to several emerging crises – a global pandemic, a nationwide racial reckoning, a severe economic downturn, and climate change – and make progress toward our overarching departmental goals, SPR developed a three-year Action Plan that identified areas of focus and specific implementation steps to advance strategic priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan.

The department's annual reports continue to evolve as we transition from reporting solely about the Park District-funded results to providing a more comprehensive summary of department data and accomplishments. The Seattle Park District is one of many funding sources in SPR's annual budget supporting almost all of our lines of business.

#### Park District accomplishments in 2021 included:

- Planting of 10,573 trees and 43,121 native plants to support healthy urban forests
- Enhanced Cleaning team completion of deep cleaning at 40 facilities (above and beyond enhanced cleaning for COVID protocols)
- Improvements to Dogs Off-Leash Areas at Dr. Jose Rizal, I-5 Colonnade, Kinnear, Magnolia Manor, North Acres, and Woodland parks
- 35 “Welcome Back Seattle” recreation grants awarded for a total value of \$268,000 serving 7,630 participants and providing 1,050 hours of programming
- 62 virtual programs amounting to 750 program hours for 6,200 older adults and 148 in-person programs totaling 975 program hours for 8,850 seniors

As always, I'd like to thank Seattle voters for your support of the Park District starting with the approval of the property tax-funded measure in August 2014. Public interest and input helped shape the first cycle of projects and programs funded by the Park District from 2015 to 2020, and they have continued to inform our recommendations for the next cycle (2023 to 2028) through 2021's listening sessions and other strategic planning engagement efforts.

Sincerely,  
**Christopher Williams**  
Acting Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation

# **FROM THE BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSIONERS**

## **DEAR SEATTLE RESIDENTS:**

2021 was a pivotal year of transition in preparation and planning for the next six-year cycle of the Seattle Park District, and the Board was pleased to support and actively participate in these efforts.

As one of the first steps, in July 2021, the Board of Park Commissioners merged with the Park District Oversight Committee (PDOC) to form a single oversight organization: the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners or BPRC. The action was taken to more efficiently utilize the time, knowledge, and expertise of community volunteers and address concerns about ambiguity and overlap between the two bodies.

Also in 2021, we participated in listening sessions with other City boards and commissions as part of Seattle Parks and Recreation's (SPR's) extensive community outreach to inform development of the 2022-2024 Action Plan, which identifies implementation steps outlined in SPR's Strategic Plan, and will inform the next cycle of Park District funding priorities. The listening sessions were part of an extensive community engagement process that included online open houses, surveys, and email responses, reaching a total of more than 9,000 parks and recreation users.

This provided invaluable input for Park District and overall SPR planning, and helped center planning efforts on equity: giving voice and priority to communities disproportionately affected by the pandemic, including communities of color and other historically marginalized groups.

We are proud to serve in our roles as Commissioners on behalf of the public and are pleased to join the department in presenting a summary of 2021 accomplishments.

Sincerely,

**Marlon Herrera and Jessica Farmer**

Co-Chairs, Seattle Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners



# Park District Overview

In 2014, Seattle voters approved a proposition that created the Seattle Park District (also known as a metropolitan tax district), which collects a portion of property taxes to fund parks and recreation services. In 2021, the Park District collected \$0.21 per \$1,000 of assessed property value for a total of \$56,044,540.

The Park District is governed by the Seattle City Council acting as the Park District Board with oversight from the 15-member Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners (BPRC). Governance and oversight are described in the Interlocal Agreement between the City and the Park District.

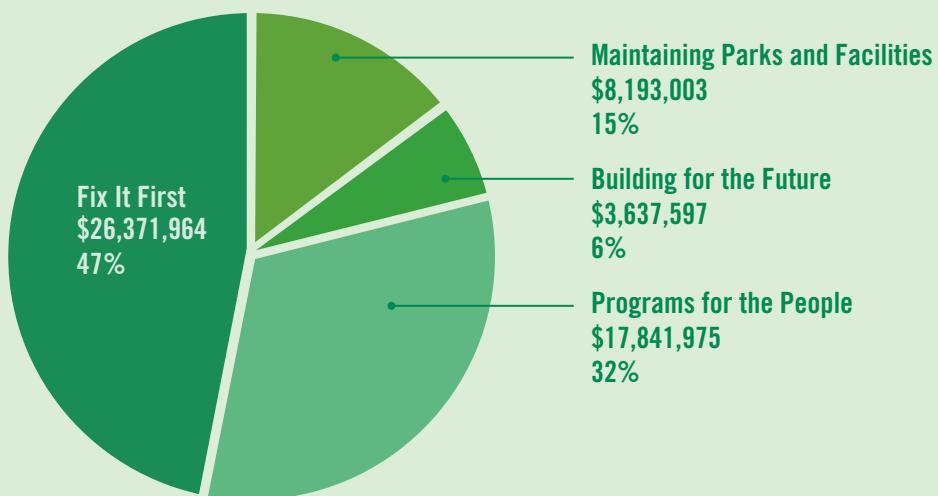
The Park District funds park and facility maintenance, recreation programs, land acquisition, park improvements, new park development and other improvements included in a six-year financial plan. The first financial plan covered the six years from 2015-2020. Due to the pandemic, planning for the next six-year cycle, 2023 to 2028, was delayed until the spring of 2022. It's important to note that the Park District is one of many funding sources that support the operations and work of Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR).

Broadly speaking, spending priorities align with SPR's Strategic Plan, and SPR's values of Healthy People, Healthy Environment, Strong Communities, and Organizational Excellence, as well as a departmentwide commitment to equity.

## FINANCES

SOURCE	CAPITAL BUDGET		OPERATING BUDGET		TOTAL
Park District	\$15,189,723	27%	\$ 40,854,816	73%	\$ 56,044,540
REET	\$22,203,387				\$ 22,203,387
Other Funds	\$15,577,000		\$134,990,985		\$150,567,985
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$52,970,110</b>		<b>\$175,845,801</b>		<b>\$228,815,912</b>

## 2021 ADOPTED PARK DISTRICT BUDGET: \$56,044,540



# Park District Financial Plan

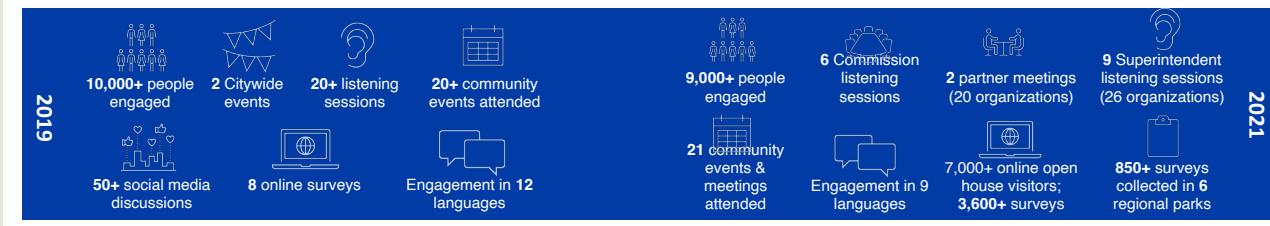
Planning for the Park District's second six-year cycle began with the development of the department's Strategic Plan, a comprehensive plan informed by more than 10,000 participants in a community engagement process. The plan guides Seattle Parks and Recreation's (SPR's) programming, services and investments from 2020 to 2032 including Park District funding priorities. SPR's Park District efforts were interrupted and paused in 2020 and 2021 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When planning resumed in 2021, SPR re-engaged with the community and shifted its focus to meet emerging needs related to four parallel crises: racial equity, public health and well-being, economic recovery, and climate change through the creation of a more focused Action Plan for 2022-2024.

The feedback received through both the Strategic Plan and Action Plan community engagement processes has factored into SPR's planning for the 2023-2028 cycle of the Seattle Park District. These investments will be discussed, prioritized, and finalized by the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners, Mayor, and City Council throughout 2022.

## SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRIORITIES

- **Restore Access to Parks & Recreation Spaces and Make Safer** (address impacts of homelessness, expand restroom access)
- **Provide More Access** (add facility hours, increase low-cost recreation opportunities)
- **Build Meaningful Relationship with BIPOC Community** (focus on community engagement, clarify pathways to implement community-identified priorities)
- **Engage More with Community/Bring Services to People** (improve website, social media, communications, and marketing)
- **Mitigate Climate Change** (invest in urban canopy, add cooling to community centers, steward natural resources sustainably)
- **Continue Maintaining the System we Have/Invest in Popular Assets** (repair pools and community centers, maintain open space, maximize usability of trails and natural spaces)
- **Desire for More/Look to the Future** (pools, trails, programs, playgrounds, bathrooms, job development)
- **Embrace New Trends** (pickleball, disc golf, roller derby, bike tracks and more...)



For more information about the Park District, including past reports and other documents, please visit [www.seattle-park-district/about](http://www.seattle-park-district/about)



## A Sampling of Park District-Funded Accomplishments for 2021:

- We completed improvements at P-Patches at Colman, Fremont, Hillman, and My Mother's Garden.
  - We provided 18,000 hours of custodial services and doubled restroom cleaning during peak season (May-September) at 41 locations.
  - Programming and activities for seniors (Lifelong Recreation) and disabled persons (Specialized Programs) were completely funded by the Park District.
  - In 2021, the Little Saigon land-banked park improvement project was re-started, joining South Park Plaza and North Rainier site in the design phase. A construction bid was awarded for the Lake City site in fall 2021.
  - The Woodland Park Zoo completed HVAC repairs, roof replacements, renovation of the Komodo Dragon Exhibit, and the Living Northwest Phase 1 project. Park District funds also supported Zoo operations to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - We began construction of facility improvements at Jefferson Community Center; renovations at 4 community centers are in design: Hiawatha, Magnolia, Queen Anne and South Park.
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# 2021 Impact Report

## HEALTHY PEOPLE



**7,620**

hours of Rec in the Street program,  
serving 1,050 participants via  
“traveling community centers”



**11,730**

meals for children  
in summer  
outdoor programs



**461**

lifeguarded days at  
8 beaches, 145,000+ attendance,  
27 First Aid, 48 rescues



**12,870**

users at hygiene & shower  
programs at  
5 community centers



**939**

enrolled in 50 Specialized Programs;  
2,800 participants during 1,558  
Lifelong Recreation program hours



## HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT



**59**

acres of Seattle's  
urban forest enrolled  
in restoration



**97%**

of Seattle residents live within  
a 10-minute walk to a park or  
publicly owned green space



**110,092**

facility maintenance  
hours completed



**41**

capital projects substantially  
completed and 13 project assess-  
ment studies finished



**53,600**

native plants,  
including 10,600+  
trees planted



## STRONG COMMUNITIES



**32**

formerly homeless adults secured  
employment after completing the  
Seattle Conservation Corps program



**226,800**

scheduled hours for  
athletic fields and 10 fields  
for free drop-in play



**51,500**

volunteer hours by  
22,700+ volunteers



**3,399**

event permits,  
16,546 bookings



**2,020**

people received a total of \$2.39 million  
in scholarships to access recreational,  
aquatics, & wellness programs

# Conservation Corps Helps Homeless Adults Develop Skills for Employment and Life

When Lee Palmer joined his cohort of the Seattle Conservation Corps (SCC) in early 2020, he was nearly out of options. His family had started living in their car when he was 11 and he struck out on his own at age 17. As a young adult, Palmer was recovering from years of drug addiction and living on the streets. He was desperately trying to gain custody of his school-age son. SCC provided him with a lifeline.

“The Corps was the best second chance in life anyone could ask for,” says Palmer, who is now a unit supervisor with the program. During the first months on the job, he was able to work on earning his GED and learning skills to “help me in my job and in my life.”

Funded in part by the Seattle Park District, SCC is a comprehensive work development program for homeless adults. A unit of Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR), SCC’s mission is to use private and publicly funded work projects to employ people experiencing homelessness in a supportive work environment, offering work experience leading to long-term employment, housing, and personal stability.

The SCC provides up to one year paid employment to participants combined with on-site case management services, housing assistance, and support for other challenges to stability. The SCC has been providing these services since 1986.

The SCC is funded to serve 50 homeless adults in an average year. Of those, approximately 80% will secure stable housing and 70% will complete the program and move on to full time employment with benefits. Program graduates move on to full-time jobs in SPR and other agencies and businesses; others pursue the skilled trades through a state-recognized pre-apprenticeship program pathway.

Many of SCC’s work projects benefit City of Seattle departments. These have included Green Stormwater Infrastructure maintenance for Seattle Public Utilities, residential board-ups of vacant properties for the Department of Construction and Inspection, and dozens of other large and small projects for Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle City Light and Seattle Parks and Recreation.

With the help of SCC, Lee Palmer now has custody of his son and is living in a home of his own.



# Rec 'N the Streets Delivers Fun Directly to Community

In the spring of 2020, the City of Seattle closed its community centers and public indoor spaces in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the city and beyond. For Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) this meant cutting off access to vital recreation programs and activities at a time when residents, who were essentially sheltering in place in their homes, needed them most.

That's when SPR Recreation staff got creative, ramping up and expanding a program started several years earlier to bring activities to the people. Called "Rec 'N the Streets," the idea was to offer mobile community centers to directly serve Seattle's communities furthest from racial, educational economic, health and social equity. Neighbors could participate outdoors with masks with social distancing in such activities as cornhole, Jenga, pickleball and other games. Virtual activities were also available.



In 2021, the innovative program continued in three areas of the city, serving hundreds of participants, staffed by five SPR teams in parks, parking lots and streets that had been shut down to motorized vehicles. Other events were added in the summer such as rock painting, nature walks, outdoor movies, Poetry in the Park, and dances.

"This program was amazing!" said one parent in Seattle's Maplewood neighborhood. "My son and I came to the park as usual and then we found all these games here. I wish this were at the park every day. I know my son would love that."

Now an integral part of the department's wide array of regular recreation programs, Rec 'N the Streets continues to offer "pop-up" scalable fun and play for all ages.

# Acquisition Expands Precious Park Space



In 2021, Seattle Parks and Recreation bought a third of an acre of land adjacent to existing park property in South Seattle, increasing its size by 30 percent. This may not seem like a significant acquisition, but in a densely populated low-income neighborhood, this precious park space will make a huge difference in the lives of seniors and families in the neighborhood.

The property is located near the corner of S Charlestown St. and 34th Ave. S just south of a senior housing complex. With the help of Park District funding, SPR purchased the land from an owner who was otherwise planning to develop the site. The owner also agreed to demolish vacant buildings and clean up contamination found on site.

The site will be incorporated into the park development project now underway at this location. Please visit [seattle.gov/parks/about-us/projects](http://seattle.gov/parks/about-us/projects) and scroll down to North Rainier Landbanked Site Park Development.

# Pickleball: A Sport for All Ages

Go down to your local public tennis court on a summer day and you'll likely see a hive of activity as a flurry of adults whack-a-mole a bright-colored whiffle ball with a 16-inch paddle. Welcome to the world of pickleball.

Invented in 1965 on Bainbridge Island, the recent growth of the sport of pickleball is astonishing. An estimated five million people play the game nationwide, a number that surged during the pandemic. For many, taking up a new sport was a way to escape the isolation of COVID and stay active in a welcoming and inclusive environment. A hybrid of tennis and table tennis with its own rules, pickleball, in fact, has been declared the official state sport of Washington.



To help harness and encourage this burgeoning interest, Seattle Parks and Recreation's Lifelong Recreation Program recruited pickleball "Ambassadors," volunteers who help organize play and make the sport safe, fun and educational at several locations throughout the city. The Ambassadors are creating access to free recreation for seniors and others. Throughout the city there are 78 outdoor courts lined for pickleball. Many of SPR's 24 community centers offer indoor courts. Lifelong Recreation for older adults is fully funded by the Seattle Park District.

At the courts in the southwest corner of Miller Playfield in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood, the four courts lined for pickleball are reserved for drop-in games at no charge for two hours on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and in good weather attract between 30 and 50 players.

"One reason pickleball is so popular is that it's fun and so easy to learn," says one of the Ambassadors. "It's also a great way to get exercise."

"I've seen firsthand the impact on older adults," says Lifelong Recreation Specialist John Hasslinger. "I regularly hear stories about people feeling alone and isolated but since playing pickleball they have a hundred friends they see all the time."

While it's true that the sport has been most popular with the senior set, recently pickleball is attracting players of all ages. At Miller, players typically range in age from 20 to 80. The popularity is also causing demand for more courts and improvements to existing courts. SPR is developing a plan to expand access to outdoor pickleball in Seattle, a process that is funded by the Park District.

# 2021 Accomplishments

## FIX IT FIRST

INITIATIVE	YEAR-END DATA
<b>Major Maintenance Backlog and Asset Management</b>	Completed 18 projects for a total of 141 projects since the Park District inception. Completed projects include: play area renovations at Lakewood and 12th and Howe; turf replacement at Magnuson Field 9; outdoor sport court restriping for basketball, tennis and pickleball at multiple sites; accessibility work at Yesler Community Center; utility work at Seward comfort station, Green Lake Bathhouse, Green Lake Small Craft Center, Volunteer Park and Cal Anderson; and 7 planning studies.
<b>Community Center Rehabilitation &amp; Development</b>	Began construction at Jefferson Community Center; renovations at 4 community centers were still in design: Hiawatha, Magnolia, Queen Anne, and South Park.
<b>Saving Our City Forests</b>	Staff at 25+ partner organizations and agencies joined 177 paid participants and volunteers who donated 30,866 hours of time during hundreds of community events to work at 119 parks to weed and plant 10,573 trees and 43,121 native plants.
<b>Aquarium Major Maintenance</b>	Maintained building systems including elevators, HVAC, electrical and plumbing. Renovated veterinary clinic and maintained animal exhibits.
<b>Zoo Operations Support</b>	Completed projects: HVAC repairs, roof replacements, completion of a renovated Komodo Dragon Exhibit, and completion of the Living Northwest Phase 1 project. Park District funds also supported Zoo operations to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.
<b>Ongoing Utility Funding</b>	Supported approximately 20% of the department's annual water and surface water management expenses across the parks system.

## MAINTAINING PARKS AND FACILITIES

INITIATIVE	YEAR-END DATA
<b>Increase Preventive Maintenance</b>	3rd shift maintenance crew remained reassigned to the day shift or reassigned to Mission Essential Functions (MEF) during the pandemic. MEF support included: repair and maintenance of life safety systems, custodial cleaning (childcare, shower program, shelters), and the Social Distancing Ambassador program. Planning started for returning 3rd shift to night work. Enhanced Cleaning team, while tasked with COVID cleaning protocols, still completed enhanced deep cleaning, floor care, and pressure washing at 40 facilities. This included high dusting, window cleaning, floor scrubbing, wiping down walls and counters, carpet shampooing, window cleaning, and sanitizing various areas.
<b>Provide Clean, Safe, Welcoming Parks</b>	Supported maintenance of developed parks with a year-end total of 342,000 hours including doubled comfort station cleaning during peak season (May–Sept.) at 41 locations.
<b>Make Parks Safer</b>	Continued to fund 1 Animal Control /SPR team to address animal offenses in parks. First-time offenses are usually verbal or written warnings and subsequent offenses result in tickets for dog owners. Park visitors can inform locations for “emphasis patrols” through the City’s Find It Fix It app.
<b>Improve Dog Off-Leash Areas</b>	Improvements include Dr. Jose Rizal, I-5 Colonnade, Kinnear, Magnolia Manor, North Acres, and Woodland parks.
<b>Rejuvenate Our P-Patches</b>	Completed P-Patch improvements at Colman, Fremont, Hillman, and My Mother's Garden.

## PROGRAMS FOR PEOPLE

INITIATIVE	YEAR-END DATA
<b>Restore Community Center Operations</b>	Recreation staff continued to serve the public in specific program areas throughout the pandemic and community centers re-opened their doors for public operating hours under COVID protocols. Centers offered activity camps at 4 hub locations, ramped up the return of Late-Night programming for teens, and offered youth sports including basketball, track, flag football, and volleyball.
<b>Recreation Opportunities for All; Put the Arts in the Parks; Get Moving Fund</b>	Recreation Opportunities for All, Put the Arts in Parks, and Get Moving Fund activities were paused for 2021. Instead, SPR initiated Welcome Back Seattle (WBS) grants. We received 75 WBS grant applications of which 35 were awarded for a total value of \$268,290. Funded activities supported 7,627 participants and 1,050 hours of programming in 2021.
<b>Better Programs for Young People—Seattle's Future</b>	Provided 528 stipends worth over \$274,000 for youth employment and readiness through the Youth Employment and Service-Learning program. The Youth Program Quality Assessment Tool supported a youth and teen career lab.
<b>Meeting the Needs of People with Disabilities</b>	Specialized Programs created 130 virtual program videos. Had 2,151 participants join virtual programming. Re-started in-person programs providing Day Camp experiences for 181 youth and adults with disabilities. The day camps were offered at John C. Little and Ravenna parks.
<b>More Programs for Older Adults</b>	Lifelong Recreation held virtual programs in winter and spring switching to a combination of virtual and in-person outdoor programs in the summer and virtual and in-person programs in community centers in the fall. Offered approximately 62 virtual programs amounting to 747 program hours with 6,176 attending these programs. Offered in-person programming in the summer and fall of 2021 with approximately 148 programs totaling 973 program hours and 8,852 in attendance.
<b>Customer Service and Technology</b>	Business Service Center completed 6,702 system adjustments, prepared 65 reports, and contacted 5,713 customers by email and 8,167 customers by phone. Also completed several system improvements that provided customers the ability to purchase Aquatics Discount Rec Pass, Discount Fitness Pass, and 30-day pass online; and the ability to make Amy Yee Tennis Center court rentals online and purchase AYTC memberships online. Made several system adjustments due to COVID impacts, such as Copay Relief and Seattle Public School Discounts for Childcare 2020-2021 school year.

## BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

INITIATIVE	YEAR-END DATA
<b>Park Land Acquisition and Leverage Fund</b>	Completed 2 important property acquisitions in September 2021: North Rainier Addition (see page 9) and Duwamish Waterway Park Addition (final park acreage subject of the City's interdepartmental Duwamish Valley Action Plan planning).
<b>Major Projects Challenge Fund</b>	Design completed for the Volunteer Park Amphitheater project (construction anticipated in 2022). The final 2 Challenge Fund projects, Green Lake Small Craft Center and South Park Playfield, were in the design phase.
<b>Maintain, Activate Seattle's New Waterfront Park</b>	Replacement for Pier 58/Waterfront Park was in design in 2021 and is expected to be in construction in 2022. Pier 62 is completed and many activities have been planned there. Much of the waterfront was in construction during 2021. Construction was underway on Alaskan Way, Overlook Walk, and Ocean Pavilion. A waterfront restroom, near Pier 58 has been in design, as well as a replacement for Pier 58/Waterfront Park; construction of both projects is anticipated in 2022. Pier 62 is in use, and Pier 63 is closed and will be demolished (and not replaced) in 2022 or 2023.
<b>Maintain 14 New Parks at Land-Banked Sites</b>	During the pandemic, 5 projects were put on hold: Ernst Park, Wedgewood, West Seattle Junction, Morgan Junction, and 48th and Charlestown. In 2021, the Little Saigon site was re-started, joining South Park Plaza and North Rainier site in the design phase. The Lake City land-banked site was awarded for construction in fall 2021. We anticipate that these final 4 funded sites will be in construction in 2022 or 2023.
<b>Maintain Smith Cove Park</b>	Smith Cove Park project was on hold through 2021.
<b>Activating and Connecting to Greenways</b>	Began construction on Cheasty Bike Pedestrian Trail and improvements to Central Park Trail through Judkins and Dr. Blanche Lavizzo parks. Projects at Gas Works and I-90 and Judkins Station in design.
<b>Performance Monitoring and Strategic Management</b>	Developed a 3-year Action Plan that identifies areas of focus and specific implementation steps that advance many of the long-range strategic priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan. Facilitated 11 monthly performance data sessions called SPRStats. This helps direct SPR's staff work plans in the near term and holds us accountable to the communities we serve.
<b>Urban Parks Partnership</b>	Worked with community partners such as the Downtown Seattle Association, Friends of Waterfront Seattle, Freeway Park Association, Interim CDA/Chinatown International District BIA, and others to support 2,828 events and 29,908 hours of park activation. Leveraged over \$1.1M in non-City investment in downtown parks.



**Seattle**  
Parks & Recreation

[www.seattle.gov/parks](http://www.seattle.gov/parks)

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