

2024 Annual Report



Seattle
Parks & Recreation



At the 2024 Big Day of Play, 4,200 participants enjoyed a day filled with fitness, fun, and multicultural celebration at Rainier Playfield

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Dear Parks and Recreation Community,

I'm excited to share our 2024 annual report with you!

According to a recent report¹ from the Trust for Public Land, **parks are critical infrastructure for community health and wellness**. Access to parks and playgrounds correlates with increased physical activity, reduced depression and anxiety, and increased social interaction. That's why we at Seattle Parks and Recreation work so hard to provide equitable access to parks and recreation facilities—and we're proud to report that 99% of residents live within a 10-minute walk to a park, and this holds true regardless of race or income, making us 6th best ranked park system in America in 2024.

I'm also especially proud of our work in 2024 **expanding some of our recent signature initiatives**:

- Our *Park Ranger* program doubled in size and began operating without any geographic restrictions for the first time, providing education and facilitating compliance with the Park Code in all parts of the city.
- Mayor Harrell's *Seattle Mentors* initiative hit its stride in 2024, connecting young people to caring adult mentors representing dozens of career fields.
- For the first time, our *Swim Seattle* initiative made introductory swim lessons free to all scholarship-qualified youth, and our staff built multicultural partnerships and developed new ways to connect the young people most at risk of drowning to swim lessons.
- We hosted our first *Tribal Nations Gathering*, engaging Tribal partners to strengthen our government-to-government relationship and discuss meaningful ways to foster collaboration and dialogue.

Our ability to provide these services depends on the dedication of our hardworking staff. They make our parks, natural areas, and recreation facilities shining examples of community pride, resplendency, and a commitment to people and the environment—so thank you for supporting what we do, and for making memories, and doing life in our abundant Seattle park system!

#SeattleShines

AP Diaz

Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation



Photos:
Be'er Sheva
Park Grand
Re-Opening in
April 2024

¹Foderaro L.W., Klein, W. The Power of Parks to Promote Health. San Francisco: Trust for Public Land, 2023. www.tpl.org/parks-promote-health-report.

Dear Seattle Residents,

As your Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners (BPRC), our role is to represent you as we provide oversight, consultation, and recommendations to Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) on its parks, programs, and facilities.

As you review SPR's 2024 Annual Report, we want to recognize the hard work and dedication of the employees of SPR who made the accomplishments in this report possible and who continue to serve as stewards of our amazing parks and recreation system.

In preparation for the development of this annual report, the BPRC's Performance Oversight Subcommittee reviewed SPR's performance measures closely. While there is always room to do more, we want to note that improvements in reporting and data collection are providing clearer insights into parks utilization and engagement.

In 2024, SPR continued to focus on accomplishing the commitments made as part of the Cycle 2 Park District financial plan. These commitments, in turn, reflect the key items that the public, the Mayor, and the Park District Board found critical for Seattle's park system now—investing in safe and accessible parks, sustaining the urban tree canopy, decarbonizing facilities, expanding opportunities for youth mentorship, and more.

Some of these items are fully implemented and worth celebrating, including an expanded Park Rangers program, restrooms and play areas in renovation, and expanded operating hours at Teen Life Centers. In some cases, the Citywide partial hiring freeze and other elements of financial uncertainty impacted the department's ability to fully meet its commitments, especially as it relates to restroom maintenance and graffiti response. It's also important to note that in the case of larger capital projects (community center redevelopments and new park development, for example), critical progress in planning and design isn't always apparent in budget or performance, due to the multi-year nature of complex projects.

We look forward to continuing our oversight in 2025, where we will track the department's response to the City Auditor's restrooms audit (underway at the end of 2024), keep an eye on major capital projects, and continue to support the provision of a fantastic park system.

Sincerely,

Ryan Baum
Whitney Nakamura

2025 Co-Chairs of the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners



Welcome to Seattle Parks and Recreation's 2024 Annual Report!

The Seattle Park District & Cycle 2

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) equips employees and the public for well-being as we support healthy people, a thriving environment, and vibrant community. **2024 marked the second year of the 2023–2028 Park District financial plan that significantly increased investments in many of Seattle's parks and recreation services.** We call this new era "Cycle 2." These new Park District dollars were additive to a base budget made up of many funding sources, and we established performance goals and service levels tailored to Cycle 2, ensuring we effectively steward and operate Seattle's park and recreation system.

Annual Reporting

Providing annual reports on our activities has been a key element of our accountability to residents and taxpayers since 2015. Recognizing the intertwined nature of our funding, our Cycle 2 reports offer a holistic view of our accomplishments *across all funding streams*—not just Park District dollars. We will continue to report specifics of Park District spending in detailed [appendices](#), as well as additional performance data and project details.

About 2024

In 2024, we made significant strides in fulfilling Cycle 2 commitments, from renovating four restrooms and increasing Teen Life Center operating hours to expanding the Park Ranger program citywide and planting hundreds of large trees in developed parks. This report highlights our progress, with a #SeattleShines sun icon marking commitments we are actively working toward or have already achieved.

Along with most City departments, SPR also faced resource constraints in 2024, including a partial Citywide hiring freeze that impeded progress as planned. Despite these challenges slowing some of our work, we met the majority of our performance goals.

The Power of Partnerships

We also continued to engage, support, and be supported by community partners—from the 49 officially recognized "Friends Of" groups who steward greenspaces and engage community, to major partners like the Seattle Parks Foundation, the Associated Recreation Council, the Seattle Aquarium Society, the Woodland Park Zoological Society, and more. The following pages explore how these collaborations bring value to our community.

A key focus in 2024 was deepening our partnerships with Tribal Nations. In January, SPR hosted its own Tribal Nations Gathering, building upon the City's [Tribal Nations Summit commitments](#). This event underscored our commitment to strengthening government-to-government relationships with Tribal Nations. Following the gathering, SPR is focusing on building lasting relationships through streamlined engagement processes, creating avenues for ongoing collaboration and dialogue, and fostering meaningful partnerships.





Healthy People

Our parks, facilities, and programs promote physical and mental wellness, provide opportunities to build healthy habits, and support social well-being.



6 playgrounds renovated



478 lifeguarded beach days at **6** beaches; welcoming **128,681** visitors, with **92** rescues made, and **12** first aid incidents addressed



1,825 free youth swim lessons provided by Swim Seattle and **2,591** participants attended free teen swims, summer beach lessons, and community workshops



8,036 free meals for children in summer outdoor programs



16,972 participants engaged in Rec’N the Streets mobile programming



5,446 participants supported through shower programs at **5** community centers



1,807 participants enrolled in Specialized Programs for people with disabilities



\$460,768 in grants provided to **36** community-based organizations to provide free, culturally-relevant recreation



20,915 participants enrolled in Lifelong Recreation for older adults



\$1,547,018 provided in childcare scholarships benefiting **507** young people and their families



\$469,709 provided in recreation program scholarships for **1,700** participants



SPR’s Specialized Programs has meant that Megan can live a more fulfilling life and get out in the community. It has given her something to look forward to, and a way to connect and make new friends. The team is always going above and beyond to look out for Megan and make sure she’s happy, healthy, and having a great time. They are a Parks life saver—I don’t know what we’d do without this program and this staff!”

— Andrew Houle and Amy Phung, family and caretakers of Megan Houle, a Specialized Programs participant



Thriving Environment

We support a thriving environment through equitable park access, environmental education and community stewardship, ecosystem restoration and habitat protection, emissions reduction and energy conservation, water efficiency and green infrastructure, waste reduction and diversion, and climate resiliency.



35 new acres of Seattle’s urban forest enrolled in ecosystem restoration, for a total of **2,032** acres in various stages of restoration



66,402 native plants installed, and **7,642** native trees planted in natural areas, and **336** larger trees planted in developed parks



13 miles of natural area trails maintained



16 buildings assessed for solar installation potential, and **18** maintenance facilities evaluated for electrical and other upgrades—critical steps in preparation for facility decarbonization



14 electric vehicles purchased to replace gas-powered vehicles and **51** vehicle charging stations installed to support fleet electrification



1 community center retrofitted for energy efficiency, and **1** historic building converted from oil heat to electric



23,049 participants engaged in environmental education



99% of Seattle residents live within a **10-minute walk to a park**

SPR’s Green Seattle Partnership has been essential to our urban forest restoration program, enabling us to host over 100 community-driven restoration volunteer events each year. This support allows us to bring people together to care for local greenspaces, create meaningful connections with nature, and promote a sense of stewardship.”

— Caroline Borsenik, Environmental Programs Director, Delridge Neighborhood Development Association



Vibrant Community

Our parks and facilities provide indoor and outdoor spaces that enhance the vibrancy of our city and combat social isolation by building community with people of all ages and identities. Our programs develop skills and provide employment experiences, promoting equity and inclusion.



251,953
scheduled hours on athletic fields



200+
young people and **30+** mentors engaged in Seattle Mentors programs



10
fields kept unscheduled for free drop-in play in winter and summer



1,243 verbal warnings issued by Park Rangers across **274** parks and facilities citywide



2,900+
people participated in identifying **15** projects for investment by the Park COMMUNITY Fund



22,320 hours of Park Concierge presence, **4,939** hours of buskers, and **7,530** events and activations coordinated by SPR and partners in center city parks



3,294 young people served through **4,981** hours of Community Learning Center programming at **5** Seattle Public Schools



4,705
event permits booked



60,721
community center operating hours



72,346 volunteer hours by **8,986** volunteers, valued at **\$2.4** million



The Garfield Teen Life Center (GTLC) has been instrumental in my growth as a leader, giving me the confidence and skills to mentor other youth while maintaining my 3.9 GPA. GTLC feels like a second home where I can develop professionally while making a positive impact in my community.

— Amir Mohammednur, youth participant

Finances

The **Adopted Budget** is SPR's annual allocation of operating and capital resources, determined through the City's budget process and in alignment with the 6-year financial plan for the Seattle Park District. The **Revised Budget** reflects changes to the Adopted Budget including capital appropriation that carries forward automatically each year and any additional budget changes approved as part of supplemental budget amendments authorized by City Council. Almost all of the carry forward in the Revised Budget relates to SPR's Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

Cycle 2 of the Park District added significant resources to SPR's CIP, and much of 2024 was spent ramping up to support delivery of additional projects of all types with the majority of costs anticipated later in Cycle 2 when construction for major projects will occur.

For full financial and performance information by detailed line of business, see Appendix A for the operating budget and Appendix B for the capital budget.

2024 Adopted Budget Overview

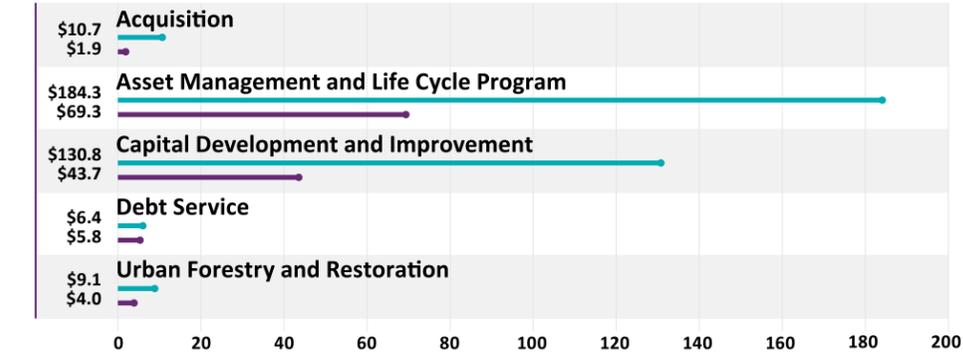
Funding Source	Operating	Capital	Total
Park District	\$66,949,047	\$50,943,672	\$117,892,719
General Fund	\$119,481,060	-	\$119,481,060
REET	-	\$13,219,136	\$13,219,136
Other Funds	\$40,581,389	\$29,287,926	\$70,123,275
Total	\$227,265,455 71%	\$93,450,735 29%	\$320,716,190

2024 Revised Budget to Actuals (in millions)

Operating



Capital



SPR's Footprint in Seattle

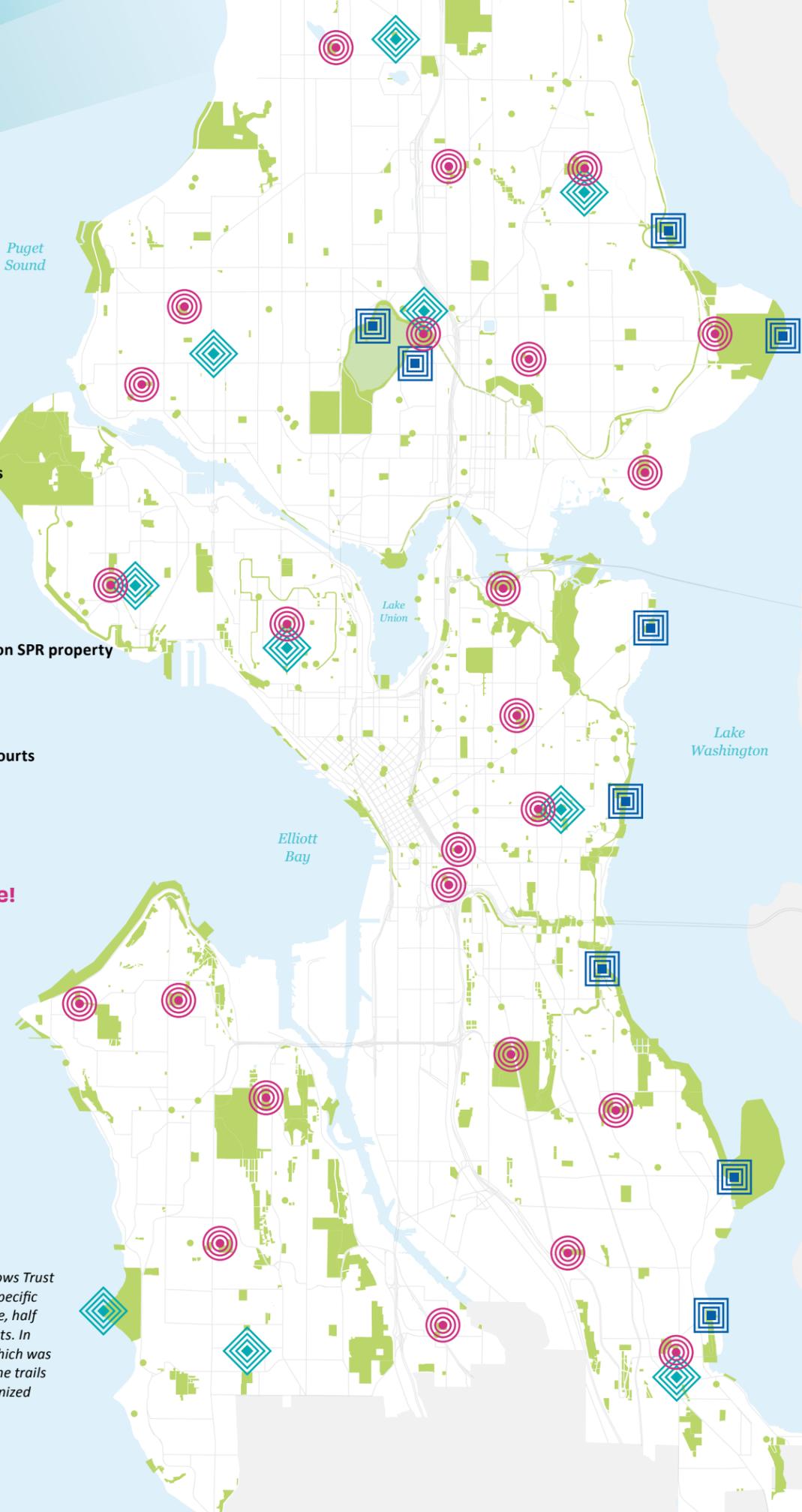
Puget Sound

- 2,584** acres of natural areas
- 155** children's play areas
- 143** racket sport courts
- 129** restrooms
- 124+** miles of soft-surface trails
- 115** ballfields
- 84** playfields
- 67.5** outdoor basketball courts
- 49.5** indoor basketball courts
- 32** P-Patch community gardens on SPR property
- 33** wading pools and sprayparks
- 23** fitness zones
- 17** dedicated outdoor volleyball courts
- 14** off leash dog areas
- 12** skateparks
- 4** golf courses
- ...and much, much more!**

-  Park
-  Community Center
-  Swimming Pool
-  Swimming Beach

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Note: This list of our assets generally follows Trust for Public Lands criteria, which includes specific ways to count various assets. For example, half basketball courts are counted as 0.5 courts. In 2023, we reported 140+ miles of trails, which was our understanding at the time. In 2024, the trails team used GIS to map our formally recognized trails and determined there to be 124+.



Healthy People

Our parks, facilities, and programs promote physical and mental wellness, provide opportunities to build healthy habits, and support social well-being.

Renovating Play Areas for Seattle's Kids

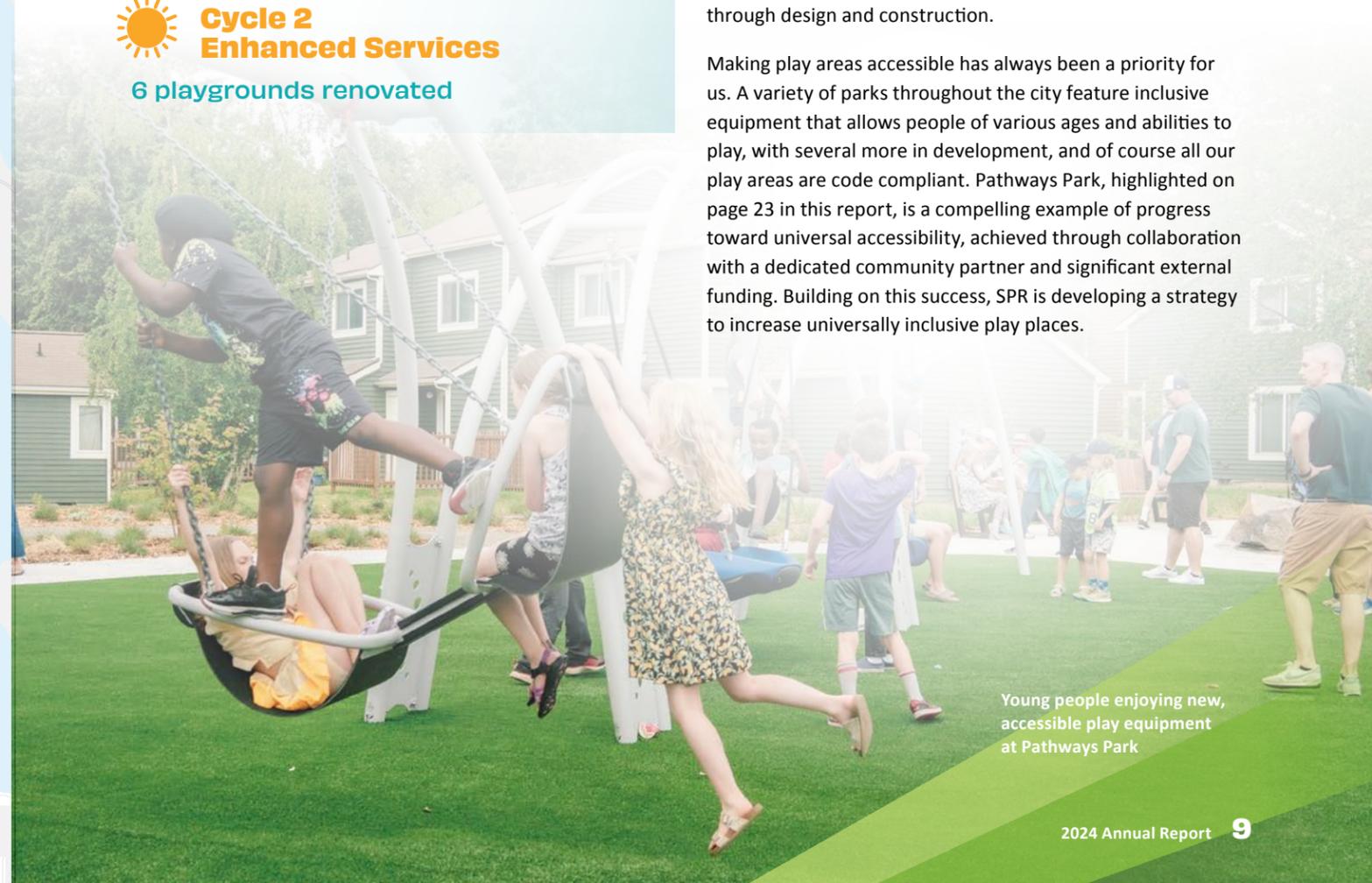
SPR's 155 play areas are some of our most cherished and well-used features. These spaces foster creative play, support physical and cognitive development, and help children build friendships—and generations of Seattle's youth have grown up enjoying them. According to industry standards, play areas should be replaced approximately 20 years to ensure they remain safe, accessible, and up-to-date. However, based on resources available prior to Cycle 2, SPR operated on a 32-year replacement cycle. Beginning in 2023, we added significant Park District funding to our base budget for play areas, and due to this we've accelerated the pace of renovations, completing six in 2023 and six more in 2024. By the end of 2028, we aim to renovate 33 playgrounds, reducing our replacement cycle to 26 years—a significant step closer to industry best practices.

 **Cycle 2 Enhanced Services**
6 playgrounds renovated

Our play area renovation program is an excellent example of SPR's approach to managing our broader portfolio of assets. We prioritize sites for renovation based on factors such as equipment age and condition, maintenance inspections, geographic distribution, equity considerations, public feedback, and what other capital investments may be scheduled for a park. Sometimes a play area renovation is just a simple swapping out of old equipment for new. Other times, it is linked to a larger project at the site that may improve drainage and accessibility, or renovate another aging asset such as a restroom.

Community engagement is central to our process. We actively seek input from park users and neighbors to better understand their needs and preferences—asking whether neighborhood kiddos prioritize swinging, climbing, spinning, or sliding. This feedback shapes the design and selection of equipment. Once the vision is clear, our in-house team of landscape architects, architects, and engineers, along with the Recreational Equipment Crew bring the project to life through design and construction.

Making play areas accessible has always been a priority for us. A variety of parks throughout the city feature inclusive equipment that allows people of various ages and abilities to play, with several more in development, and of course all our play areas are code compliant. Pathways Park, highlighted on page 23 in this report, is a compelling example of progress toward universal accessibility, achieved through collaboration with a dedicated community partner and significant external funding. Building on this success, SPR is developing a strategy to increase universally inclusive play places.



Young people enjoying new, accessible play equipment at Pathways Park



Healthy People

Rec’N the Streets: Activating Parks and Community Spaces Citywide

At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, when SPR’s community centers and indoor recreation and fitness programs were temporarily unavailable, we redeployed staff to offer safer activities outside. Even as the pandemic receded, SPR maintained this innovative approach to providing recreation services due to community response, and formalized and expanded it through Cycle 2 investments.

In 2024, our Rec’N the Streets mobile recreation program provided 1,417 activations (up from 772 in 2023) and served 16,972 participants (up from 11,241 in 2023). The team is perhaps most famous for its Mobile Playground, activating parks and community spaces with toys, art supplies, and other engaging activities for young people.

But Rec’N the Streets is far more than just a van stocked with hula hoops and basketballs. This program takes a thoughtful, data-driven approach to recreation, guided by both community input and strategic planning. Locations are selected for activation primarily by identifying gaps in our recreational service areas, and then prioritizing areas of the city where residents are lower income, more racially diverse, and with lower health outcomes and less access to physical activity. Before programming begins, staff conduct quick needs assessments and engage local residents to better understand what activities they want to see. As a result, programming reflects the unique character of each community, ranging from outdoor Tai Chi classes in Southeast Seattle to birdwatching activities in Northeast Seattle. The Rec’N the Streets team also engages with partners to activate cultural festivals and celebrations, from Eid to El Dia de los Muertos and more.

Programming highlights include:

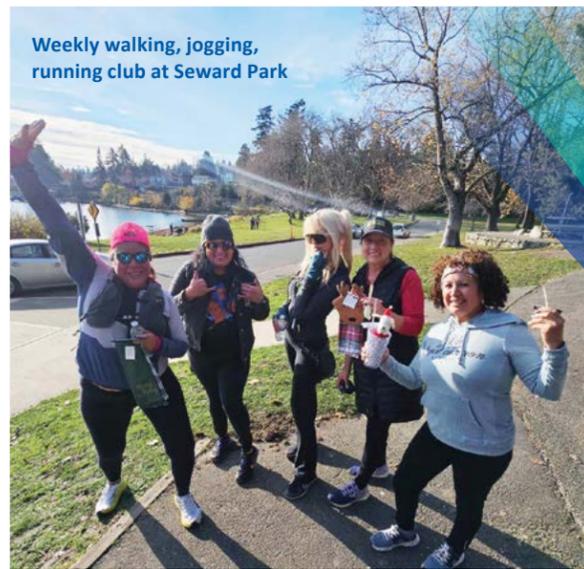
10 Million Steps in Nature: This opportunity invited families to explore the outdoors through forest adventures, nature walks, and birdwatching all over the city, and provided pedometers to participants to track the cumulative steps taken.

Skate School: At skateparks and gymnasiums throughout the city, the team introduced young people—many of them first-time skaters—to the basics of skateboarding and safety. The program helped participants develop foundational skills and foster a passion for the sport. Plans are underway to launch a similar program focused on bicycles in 2025.

Seward Park 5K: Over the summer, 20 women who didn’t identify as “runners” joined our weekly sessions at Seward Park. Together, they built connections, learned essential techniques for walking, jogging, and running, and worked toward completing a 5K run in the fall.



Skate School, a Rec’N the Streets Program



Weekly walking, jogging, running club at Seward Park

Cycle 2 Enhanced Services

16,972 participants engaged in Rec’N the Streets mobile programming, a 51% increase from 2023

Swim Seattle Updates

Swim Seattle is our effort to prevent youth drowning and decrease the racial disparities in access to swimming lessons. The key barriers are the cost of lessons and the limited number of slots for these lessons, so we provide free lessons and priority registration to any scholarship-qualified youth. Read more about the launch of this program in our [2023 Annual Report](#). In 2024, 1,825 scholarship-qualified youth participated in free swim lessons. We also continued our teen swims (providing free water access and informal lessons to teens through Late Night and our Teen Life Centers), workshops with culturally connected community partners like No More Under, and special events like a BIPOC and Allies Open Swim and a Black Lifeguard Training. Our teen swims and workshops collectively served 2,591 participants.

Scholarships Program Access

Seattle residents can apply for scholarships to reduce barriers that program fees may impose. In 2024, SPR provided \$1,547,018 in scholarships for licensed childcare (including summer camps and after school care) to 507 youth, and \$469,709 in recreation program scholarships to 1,700 participants.

To ensure these resources go to residents who need them the most, eligibility is based on household income and family size. Because Seattle is an expensive city, anyone earning below 250% of the Federal Poverty Line is eligible. Demand for our scholarships has increased significantly in recent years—from 4,750 applications in 2022 to a record 10,242 in 2024—and unfortunately outpaced available resources.

In 2024, SPR continued work related to Mayor Harrell’s [Affordable Seattle](#) Executive Order to make our scholarship application simpler and available online. Using the online CiviForm, residents can provide personal information just once and then easily apply to our scholarships as well as other City discount programs. These changes improved access to the application process, but with our scholarship funding staying relatively stable year to year, we are not able to meet the demand. Additional scholarships were provided in 2024 thanks to contributions by our major partner, the Associated Recreation Council (\$100,000), and ESRI’s Enhanced Interactions (\$11,000 for basketball programs).



507 young people received childcare scholarships, and 1,700 people received recreation program scholarships

Summer camp at Bitter Lake Community Center



Meet the SPR Team!
Jenson Yuen, Senior Lifeguard

For me, it’s all about giving back to my community. Swimming is a vital life skill to learn and there’s no better feeling than seeing kids progress through the years. The best part is some even end up as fellow coworkers!”

Jenson Yuen started as a volunteer at Meadowbrook Pool in 2010, assisting with swim lessons. Through the years, he’s gone from volunteer to temporary employee to Lifeguard to Senior Lifeguard—all in the same pool where he learned to swim. He’s currently acting as Meadowbrook’s Assistant Coordinator, helping to develop programming to teach the next generation to love the water.

A year of special events to keep Seattle healthy and active together

All across the city and all throughout the year, SPR hosts special events that have become treasured city traditions. As Barb Wade, a longtime Recreation Operations Manager, puts it, **“We have so many people in our communities of all different ages and cultures. How can we break down barriers and help people meet each other?”** Special events are major endeavors, each requiring months of planning, community, partnership, sponsor engagement, and plenty of logistics.



January: Polar Bear Plunge

What better way to start the year than an invigorating leap into Lake Washington alongside friends and neighbors? On January 1, 2024, thousands gathered at Matthews Beach for the 23rd Annual Polar Bear Plunge. Coordinated by Meadowbrook Pool, the event had lifeguards on the beach and the Seattle Police Department’s Harbor Patrol on the water to keep participants safe. The event began with a kids’ plunge for the younger polar bears. After the plunge, participants enjoyed hot drinks and received commemorative “badges of courage” to mark the occasion. Many attendees showcased patches collected over years of participation, marking their dedication to this beloved tradition. As Meadowbrook Pool Coordinator Dave Belanger explained, “The Seattle community loves this fun tradition to brave the cold to take a dunk and enter the year with a fresh start. It’s always fun to experience this with family, friends and often your neighbors. Last year someone lost their custom hat that displayed several years’ worth of bravery patches on it. The person who found it kept it for a whole year and tacked it to a tree the morning of this year’s event. The person missing the hat found it, too!”



August: Big Day of Play

Designed to celebrate diversity, promote community connection, and encourage active lifestyles, the Big Day of Play provides free, accessible recreation and wellness opportunities, particularly for underserved communities. “Everyone deserves access and the opportunity to play, connect, and thrive in Seattle,” said SPR’s Community Engagement & Special Event Program Coordinator Deja’Nay Gilliam. “You’ll find something for everyone, regardless of age, ability, and culture.” Held at Rainier Playfield, the 2024 Big Day of Play brought together over 100 community organizations, small businesses, entertainers, and performers.

More than 4,200 participants enjoyed a day filled with fitness, fun, and multicultural celebration. Activities included a 3-on-3 youth basketball tournament, tennis and pickleball clinics, arts and crafts at the block party, live performances, and various field games provided by the Rec’N the Streets team. A dedicated shuttle transported participants to the Mount Baker Rowing & Sailing Center, where they could try paddleboarding, kayaking, rowing, Dragonboat rides, and receive water safety lessons—a unique opportunity that introduced many to water recreation for the first time. SPR’s Get Moving partners (featured in the [2023 Annual Report](#)) brought interactive programming to the event, including boxing lessons by Champ Boxing Gym, high-energy jump rope sessions with the Double Dutch Divas, and a crowd-pleasing performance by Seattle’s own world-renowned breakdance crew, Massive Monkees. New to 2024, the 1-mile Fun Run drew 140 participants who ran, walked, and rolled from Lakewood Playground to Rainier Playfield, kicking off the event with energy and excitement.



December: Pathway of Lights

Every December for more than 40 years, SPR has set luminaries around Green Lake and invited the community to embrace the dark and the cold together at the Pathway of Lights. Families and friends walk the 2.8-mile trail while breaking into songs, wearing holiday sweaters and lights, and generally being silly together. Every year, regardless of whether it is a torrential downpour or a crystal-clear day, thousands of Seattleites come out to walk the illuminated lake. In 2024, while it rained for the full day as SPR staff and volunteers prepared, the clouds parted just as the event began and participants started to trickle in. Around the lake, participants encountered three stages with ongoing performances by high school jazz bands and other musicians, a food drive benefiting the nearby Family Works food bank, photo booths, and more. The event is led by the Green Lake Community Center and their Advisory Council, led by community center coordinator Jewels Jugum. Perhaps you saw her sending teams of youth volunteers out to make sure the luminaries were still glowing strong? As Jewels put it, “Pathway of Lights is a staple for our Green Lake community as well as all of Seattle. This event takes teamwork, flexibility, gratitude, and celebration. 2024 was the 44th year of this tradition, and next year makes 45!”



Thriving Environment

We support a thriving environment through equitable park access, environmental education and community stewardship, ecosystem restoration and habitat protection, emissions reduction and energy conservation, water efficiency and green infrastructure, waste reduction and diversion, and climate resiliency.

Urban Forests Don't Just Survive, They Thrive

Twenty years ago, Seattle's natural areas were struggling under the impacts of English ivy, Himalayan blackberry, and other non-native invasive species. Many of these natural areas came of age in forgotten slopes and open spaces following the widespread logging that occurred as Seattle urbanized over the course of the twentieth century. In response, in 2004, Seattle created the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) and committed to restoring our urban forests.

GSP has grown into a successful model of collaboration with community organizations and volunteers, contractors, and public employees. Through this effort, 2,032 acres of Seattle's urban forests are in various stages of restoration, with 35 new acres enrolled in GSP last year.

In 2024, over 74,000 native plants—including 7,642 trees—were planted in Seattle's natural areas, setting SPR on track to meet the Cycle 2 goal of 360,000 planted by 2028. Cycle 2 of the Park District increased our investment in this important work by approximately \$1 million annually.

Part of GSP's urban forest restoration effort is creating "survival rings" around trees. Invasive ivy is cut off the trunk and removed from the ground in a circle so that it doesn't creep back up in the near future. By the end of 2024, GSP had completed 61,077 of these since 2004—saving over 61,000 trees! In the Duwamish Head Greenbelt, GSP Forest Steward Doug Adams led an effort to create over 2,600 survival rings between 2021 and 2024 alone! Ivy may be persistent, but our volunteers are even more so.

Cycle 2 Enhanced Services

- 35 acres of Seattle's urban forest enrolled in ecosystem restoration
- 66,402 native plants installed, and 7,642 native trees planted in natural areas

Seattle's Ecosystem Restoration on the Global Stage

Seattle is on the world stage! And not just for international soccer next year, but also as part of global ecosystem restoration efforts. SPR is a Role Model City for the United Nations Environment Programme's #GenerationRestoration biodiversity collaboration. As part of this cohort, SPR shared the successes of our urban forest restoration program—the GSP—with representatives from 18 other international cities. The global community is impressed by our community partnership model and the impact we've made on healthy urban forests. As leaders in this space, we've been engaged to provide advice on how other cities can start similar programs in their communities.

In 2024, SPR hosted the North American celebration of World Environment Day. As part of that, SPR facilitated the creation of the largest outdoor mural in North America, on urban ecosystem restoration, by renowned artist Victor Ash, as well as another mural on ocean ecosystem restoration by Adry del Rocio. These murals highlight our connection to land and water and our responsibility to sustain local ecosystems. Topping this all off, SPR joined Deputy Mayor Emery at the COP16 Biodiversity Conference in Colombia to collaborate with cities around the world on ways to advance urban biodiversity efforts. By sharing with and learning from other cities, we are expanding our thinking around how to create a thriving environment here in Seattle.

Cycle 2 Progress on Priorities

27 irrigation controllers upgraded to increase efficient use of water

Conserving Water and Landscapes

Even in rainy Seattle, water conservation is an important part of managing our parks sustainably. Summers are usually dry, and with climate change we expect (and are already experiencing) an increase in heat and drought. Keeping our plants alive while also saving water is a big challenge.

To adapt to these realities, SPR has been installing "smart" irrigation systems that align watering with weather patterns to get the right amount of water to thirsty plants while not wasting any. Currently 85% of our irrigation systems (at 164 parks) use these central control systems, which also help identify leaks when they occur. Between 2023 and 2024, SPR upgraded 27 irrigation controllers, with more to come before the end of Cycle 2.

Identifying aberrations in our irrigation data is a critical component to reducing both water and financial waste, as SPR pays for all our water use. In 2024, SPR used 196 million gallons of water for irrigation. That equates to \$3.7 million in costs! While water conservation is complex to measure, our efforts are paying off. Estimates show that SPR used 34% less water in 2024 than would be expected based on weather patterns. Also, by reviewing water bills and identifying issues, SPR reduced costs by \$500,000 in 2024. We continue to save water while maintaining the living assets that we steward for the public.

Mural photo credit: Street Art for Mankind



Meet the SPR Team!
Emily Hanson,
SPR Arboriculturist

Access to nature is so important to one's sanity when living in an urban area. I chose to work for Seattle Parks and Recreation because of its exceptional parks and vast greenspaces."

Emily Hanson is part of SPR's Urban Forestry Team, currently managing the program to plant trees in developed parks—with more than 500 planted in 2023 and 2024 alone! Emily previously worked as an urban forestry manager for New York City's parks and a national environmental consulting firm, and their favorite part of the work is seeing the public enjoy open spaces.

Checking in on five maple trees planted in Pratt Park in 2023 for International Nelson Mandela Day in 2024





Thriving Environment

Preparing for a Lower Emissions Park System

A major priority for the City and for SPR is to mitigate climate change through facility decarbonization, fleet electrification, and other efforts to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. This is a long-term process with significant complexity and a high cost, but we are happy to report that SPR made tangible progress in 2024.

Facility Decarbonization Moving Ahead

SPR is embarking on a process of reducing its carbon footprint by identifying strategic opportunities to decarbonize facilities, both as standalone projects and by adding on to existing projects such as Hiawatha and South Park Community Center renovations which were under construction in 2024. This work generally entails swapping out old gas-powered furnaces for heat pumps, significantly reducing the building's overall carbon footprint. Because SPR has so many facilities, this is a big body of work, but we met a key milestone in 2024: getting approval from the City's Finance and Administrative Services to use an innovative procurement approach for certain decarbonization projects. The General Contractor / Construction Manager (GC/CM) procurement method involves bringing on a construction contractor earlier than in standard design-bid-build processes, which increases quality, efficiency, and cost certainty of the overall program. In 2024, SPR took steps to package decarbonization of Garfield, Jefferson, Rainier, and Van Asselt Community Centers, as well as the Genessee Crew Quarters together using GC/CM, following the completion of feasibility studies and hiring of a design team. These sites are all projected to be completed by the end of 2028.

Studying for Rooftop Solar

Not only are we removing carbon-intensive energy from our buildings, we're also looking to use our facilities to generate renewable energy through rooftop solar. In 2024, SPR completed several solar feasibility studies, bringing this vision a big step closer to reality. One study looked at the potential to put solar panels on rooftops of several public-facing facilities (Green Lake Small Craft Center, Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute, Pratt Fine Arts Center, and Ravenna-Eckstein Community Center), as well as several maintenance buildings. Another study, completed in collaboration with the City's Office for Sustainability and Environment using funding from the Washington State Department of Commerce, focused on the potential for larger solar systems—capable of generating and storing energy for use during power outages—at Bitter Lake and South Park Community Centers.

Electrifying our Fleets and Equipment—and Preparing our Maintenance Facilities

Based on a 2016 executive order, SPR is replacing much of our fleet with electric vehicles. So far, this mostly includes light trucks, sedans, and work vans—with our larger equipment not viable for electric just yet. In 2024, we replaced every viable gas-powered vehicle that was cycling out of service with electric—that's 14 for 2024 and 26 more on order for 2025.

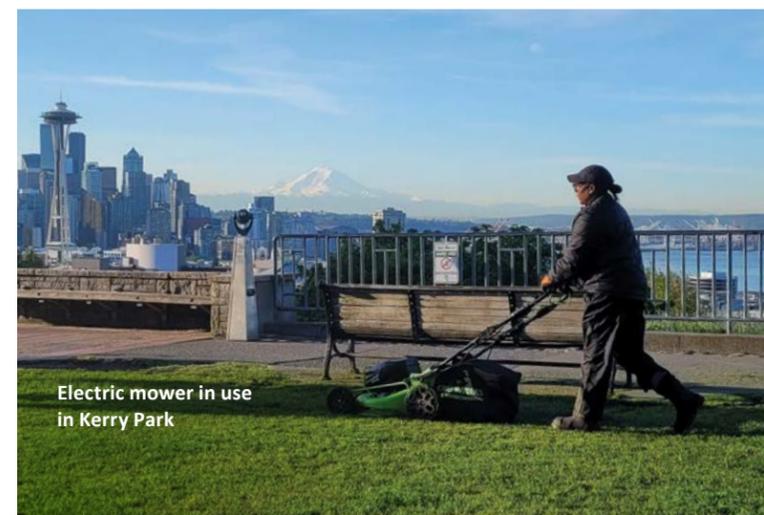
In line with a 2023 directive from Mayor Harrell, SPR led development of the citywide plan to transition from gas-powered leaf blowers to battery-powered equipment. By the end of 2024, SPR transitioned 30% of our inventory and are on track to meet the larger goal of 100% battery-powered by 2027.

While we're embracing this transition to more sustainable operations, it requires electrical infrastructure investment. For example: in 2024, we installed 51 electric vehicle chargers, and made changes to parking lots and staff practices to make sure our vehicles and equipment can stay charged.

But this is just the start of the effort needed. For many years, SPR prioritized investing in public-facing places like parks and community centers for capital improvements, so many of our maintenance barns are aging buildings without the electrical capacity to support vehicle charging, or the storage capacity to keep and charge equipment batteries. In 2024, we initiated a study of our crew quarters to identify recommendations for upgrading 18 facilities to be ready for full electrification. The study also considers how to extend the useful life of these buildings and make them more conducive for productive work.

Cycle 2 Progress on Priorities

Launch a program to decarbonize certain SPR facilities



Electric mower in use in Kerry Park



Vibrant Community

Our parks and facilities provide indoor and outdoor spaces that enhance the vibrancy of our city and combat social isolation by building community with people of all ages and identities. Our programs develop skills and provide employment experiences, promoting equity and inclusion.

Celebrating a Legacy of Positive Youth Development

For decades, SPR has provided a spectrum of teen programs, providing safe spaces, mentorship, and programs that enrich the lives of young people and connect them to career paths. In 2024, we continued this work, celebrated a legacy program, and expanded our impact through enhanced services and new programs.

Teen Life Centers

SPR's three Teen Life Centers (TLCs), Meadowbrook in North Seattle, Garfield in the Central Area, and Southwest in West Seattle, provide safe, inclusive spaces where teens can connect, learn, and grow with leadership provided by nurturing adults. Across sites, they feature drop-in gym time, game rooms and recording studios, staff to provide homework help, cooking classes, and art workshops. Cycle 2 enhanced SPR's investments in teen programming, and in 2024 TLCs expanded operating hours to provide more access to teens.

As part of a commitment to leadership development, TLCs help participants grow by engaging them in serving others. As 16-year-old Amir Mohammednur, a participant at Garfield TLC put it, the supportive environment and staff "have connected me to valuable opportunities, including serving as keynote speaker at the Parks and Recreation Martin Luther King Day celebration, teaching intro to employment and budgeting sessions to my peers in the computer room at GTLC, volunteering with the Washington Special Olympics as an announcer and medal presenter, and serving at local community food pantries."

Cycle 2 Enhanced Services

Increased operating hours at Teen Life Centers

Late Night Celebrates 35 Years

SPR's Late Night program provides safe spaces, structured activities, and meals to teens at eight facilities from 7p.m. to midnight on most Fridays and Saturdays. These programs are staffed by SPR and community volunteers, as well as officers from the Seattle Police Department to build relationships between teens and police. In 2024, Late Night reactivated youth leadership teams—engaging young people at each site weekly or biweekly to develop and run programs, events, and service projects. Another 2024 innovation was an increase in cross-site collaboration, creating opportunities for young people from across the city to get to know each other, learn to resolve conflicts, and have fun together in a safe and supportive environment. This included a Late Night Basketball League, with a series of home and away games across the city on a weekly basis. Police officers participated in a kids vs. cops game at Rainier Community Center. Spoiler: the teens won but everyone looks forward to a rematch in 2025.

In December, Late Night celebrated its 35th anniversary in an event that youth leaders from each site helped to run. As part of the event, SPR created the Late Night Hall of Fame at Rainier Community Center to honor the legacy of the generations of community members—staff and volunteers—who dedicate their Friday and Saturday nights to support Seattle's young people.

We recognize that 2024 included the tragic loss of too many young people in Seattle from violence, including some participants in our programs. The impact of these losses was deeply felt by our staff, other program participants, and the broader community. We remain committed to listening to and learning from young people, their families, and their communities, and ensuring that our work continues to foster connection, healing, and hope for all teens who walk through our doors.



Longtime Late Night employees and volunteers are honored at the launch of the Late Night Hall of Fame at Rainier Community Center



Vibrant Community

Community Learning Centers — Partners in Student Success

Our commitment to young people doesn't end once they leave our parks and teen centers—we are also an integral part of serving youth through our Community Learning Centers (CLCs), which lead after-school activities, school break camps, and comprehensive summer school at five Seattle schools. CLCs are partners in student success, and principals welcome SPR into their buildings because we support the shared mission of reducing the achievement gap, especially in math and literacy. We bring unique programming (enrichment like art, dance, and cooking, alongside culturally responsive mentoring and mental health supports) into school buildings, with a focus on students furthest from educational justice.

In 2024, we provided nearly 5,000 hours of programming at these schools, serving 3,294 individual young people. One new element of the program in 2024 was the Saturday Academy at Aki Kurose, which focused on students that need additional math supports. For 10 Saturdays, 60 Aki students received 90 minutes of math instruction from a certified teacher, and then took part in two hours of afternoon workshops focused on mental health and college and career readiness.

These programs are almost entirely funded by grants and contracts, and in 2024 they leveraged \$1,650,000 in non-SPR funding—primarily from Seattle Public Schools, King County's Best Starts for Kids, and the Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning's Families, Education, Preschool, and Promise Levy. These grants are often performance-based, with reimbursement only based on programs demonstrating their value to student success—and CLCs keep getting results year after year!

Meet the SPR Team!

Laura Wilburn,
Recreation
Program
Coordinator



Youth programming has always been my passion. For me, it's the spark that youth get when they get it. The excitement of learning and growing, the aha moments."

Laura Wilburn started with SPR in 1999 as a temporary Recreation Leader with Late Night, and through many roles since she has honed her skills in planning and coordinating programming for the public. Several generations of young people will remember her most fondly for her Teen Treks—ambitious outdoor adventures throughout Washington's wild lands with Seattle teens.



3,294 young people served, through 4,981 hours of Community Learning Center programming

Seattle Mentors in Action

Seattle Mentors, an initiative launched by Mayor Harrell as part of Cycle 2, promotes impactful mentorship, social/emotional health, and career exposure opportunities by connecting young people with caring adults.

As a new program, SPR spent 2023 defining program outcomes, recruiting partners, and training staff. 2024 was a year of moving from pilot phase to an up-and-running network of programs that served more than 200 youth and engaged more than 30 mentors representing various career fields.

Like many of our programs for teens, Seattle Mentors leads with youth voice. A survey of more than 120 young people identified what those youth want out of mentorship—naming things like career development, financial literacy, and nutrition. With this in mind, we developed a set of programs to meet these needs through relationships with community members. Some highlights from 2024:

Visionary Voices is a partnership with SPR's Youth At Work program, the Urban League, and the NAACP that connected young people and caring adults with a focus on professional development and preparedness. Visionary Voices served 44 youth from across the city during Summer 2024. The partners hosted speakers, from SPR staff to local entrepreneurs to elected officials, and took field trips to the Microsoft campus to learn more about the local tech sector and to the Seahawks' practice facility to learn about the business side of sports. Visionary Voices offers additional events featuring inspirational speakers quarterly during the school year.

Empowerment Exchange, a small-group mentoring program that engaged 98 young people in 14 cohorts in 2024, organized around areas of career interest—including music production, entrepreneurship, and athletics management. These groups met for 8 weeks at Teen Life Centers, community centers, and schools around Seattle, with a focus on career inspiration and exposure. In a post program survey, 98% of mentees responding reported that they felt more confident in pursuing their career interests, with one noting that "being able to see more people of color in careers that I am interested in, and having a mentor that worked in the field... allowed me to learn more about the career and what I can do to reach my goal."

Mayor Harrell believes that raising our young people is "an all-of-society effort," so Seattle Mentors has joined Mentor Washington in a recruitment drive calling for caring adults of all kinds to step up as mentors. Whether through our Seattle Mentors program, or with a community organization, a church, temple, or mosque—we invite you to be part of the vibrant community we need to mentor the next generation.

Cycle 2 Enhanced Services

Launch a new community-based mentorship program, as part of Mayor Harrell's vision to mobilize community centers and other SPR assets as engines for safety and opportunity for all Seattle's youth



200+ young people and 30+ mentors took part in Seattle Mentors programs



Community Learning Center participants take part in a Restorative Circle at Aki Kurose Middle School



Seattle Mentors Ignite Your Potential Event



Our Park Rangers were excited to strike a pose with this very stylish Junior Ranger who they met “patrolling” at Carkeek Park

Park Rangers Go Citywide

Seattle’s Park Rangers provide a vital connection between open spaces and the community that uses them—and now they are working throughout the city!

Historically, just a handful of Park Rangers worked in Downtown parks due to an agreement with the Seattle Police Officers Guild. But thanks to some productive collaboration with the police union, our hard-working and dedicated Rangers are now educating members of the public, assisting with events, and supporting accessible and open parks all across Seattle. With the graduation of 13 new Rangers in May 2024, the Ranger team doubled in size.

Rangers begin work at 6 a.m. and don’t stop until late in the evening. Every day is different for a Park Ranger—one night a Ranger might help find a person lost in Discovery Park, the next they are providing security and public assistance at an outdoor movie in Cal Anderson. While the Rangers do have the power to issue citations, they prefer to achieve voluntary compliance through verbal warnings. The Rangers prioritize educational engagements with the public, informing people about park rules such as keeping dogs on leash and not



1,243 verbal warnings issued by Park Rangers across 274 parks and facilities

littering, and call-in other responders such as police and fire when appropriate. They also serve as ambassadors about our parks and recreation system and support the preservation of natural resources.

Cycle 2 Progress on Priorities

Expand the custodial team to provide 7-day coverage and increased cleaning in facilities

Custodians Keep SPR Facilities Up and Running

None of the services offered in our facilities would be possible without the behind-the-scenes work of our stellar custodial team. As we have expanded operating hours and programs across our system, this increased use means our buildings need a little more custodial love. Thanks to additional resources from Cycle 2, an expanded custodial team provides daily cleaning and maintenance to our 26 community centers, three Teen Life Centers, and a wide variety of other buildings. In 2024, they were essential to our efforts to divert recyclable and compostable materials from the waste stream, provide hygiene access to homeless people through our free showers program, and support the emergency shelter at Ravenna-Eckstein Community Center, following an apartment fire.

Building For The Future

SPR takes care of a huge system of parks, facilities, and individual assets. We take a long-range view to our work, and many capital initiatives take years of planning and incremental progress before full implementation. Here, we’re proud to report on some of the steps we’ve taken in 2024 to advance long-term goals like building great parks in collaboration with community partners.

Park CommUNITY Fund Selects 15 Community-driven Projects

In Cycle 2, SPR launched the Park CommUNITY Fund to advance park equity through a community-led process. The goal is to make capital investments originating from community that reduce disparities and expand access to quality parks, facilities, and open spaces. The Fund developed its guiding principles and its unique approach to engaging the community in partnership with the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners (BPRC), community-based organizations representing historically underserved communities and identities, and several City commissions.

In 2024, the Fund officially kicked off with a project selection process. Community members submitted more than 240 ideas which SPR staff developed into possible projects. More than 2,900 people were engaged at various stages of the process, from submitting project ideas to weighing in on options! After final review by the BPRC and Superintendent, SPR announced 15 selected projects in October 2024. Selected projects include both small but impactful improvements (Tier 1), and transformative changes to parks (Tier 2). Check out the full list below, and read more details on our website.

In 2025 and beyond, SPR will continue to collaborate with community partners to implement these projects—check out future Annual Reports for updates, or check out the Park CommUNITY Fund’s webpage.

Tier 1 (Projects Up to \$150,000)

- Art and signage at Hutchison Playground
- Bathroom study of Northeast Seattle parks
- Community gathering improvements at Haller Lake Street End
- Covered shelter at Roxhill Park
- Duwamish art and signage at Herrings House Park
- Kids basketball hoops in Southeast Seattle parks
- Outdoor cultural space at Green Lake Community Center
- Outdoor exercise equipment in South Park
- Replacing exercise equipment at Hing Hay Park
- Spray park feasibility study in Rainier Beach
- Water bottle refilling station at Garfield Teen Life Center

Tier 2 (Projects Between \$150,000 and \$1.5 million)

- Access improvements at Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center
- Access improvements for Denny Blaine Park
- Black Legacy Community Master Plan in the Central District
- Covered basketball courts at Be’er Sheva Park

Cycle 2 Progress on Priorities

Partner with communities to expand equitable access to quality parks and facilities





Young rowers enjoy the new Green Lake Small Craft Center



Pathways Park Ribbon Cutting Celebration

Building Great Parks, in Partnership with Community

Parks are powerful community-building infrastructure, and great communities support great parks—it’s a symbiotic relationship! SPR partners with more than 49 community-based “Friends of” groups that steward, activate, and enliven our parks. Sometimes, these groups even play a major role in envisioning improvements to parks and supporting fundraising to bring those visions to life.

In 2024, SPR is proud to report that three major improvement projects—many years in the making, and with lots of community support—completed construction and opened to the public.

Be'er Sheva Park

The neighborhood may be called Rainier Beach, but for many years there was such a distinct lack of water access that “Where’s the beach?” became an ironic community slogan. SPR partnered with neighbors organized as the Link2Lake Steering Committee to make major improvements to Be’er Sheva Park, driven by a community design process that brought together youth, local businesses, and community organizations. Park improvements included building a covered stage, lighting, seating, grills, gathering spaces, and of course a shoreline promenade to finally link neighbors to their lake. In addition to SPR’s project funding, this \$2.5 million renovation required additional resources that came from the Department of Neighborhoods’ (DON) Neighborhood

Matching Fund, King County, the State of Washington, and significant community fundraising through Link2Lake and the Seattle Parks Foundation. More work continues in 2025, including installation of a fitness zone, renovation of the playground, and adjustments to the stage that was damaged in a windstorm.

Green Lake Small Craft Center

With a small staff and plenty of community partners, the Green Lake Small Craft Center has hosted highly popular rowing classes, paddling programs, and regattas for decades—all out of a tiny, aging building tucked into the southwest corner of Green Lake Park. It had long been a vision of SPR staff and the Advisory Councils that support programming at the site to remake this building and expand access to the water sports they offer. In 2024 that vision came to life when the redeveloped Small Craft Center opened to the public. At 10,800 square feet, the new facility is more than double the size of the old building, and includes more instructional space and boat storage. It is also fully accessible, to support accessible boating options. Funding for this project came from SPR’s capital budget, the Major Projects Challenge Fund (a Cycle 1 precursor to SPR’s Park CommUNITY Fund), King County, the State of Washington, DON, and significant community fundraising. Find out how you can visit this new building and get on the water at Green Lake [on our website](#).

Pathways Park

Almost seven years in the making, the new Pathways Park opened in June 2024. Created by and for the community near and far, this new accessible and inclusive space is a testament to Eli Reischl and the determination of his mom, Paige, and an entire community to create a place where everyone belongs. Experiencing the world with Eli, who happened to have Down syndrome, Paige noticed people with disabilities missing from many shared spaces. Connecting with a broader community, together they realized not only do many parks and public places contain barriers that unintentionally prevent people with disabilities from full participation, there are also others who feel excluded from community spaces. And, when people don’t feel safe, welcome and included, our public spaces are missing out on the love, joy, and talents these members of our community have to share. The Eli’s Park Project Committee rallied community partners, including landscape architects at Site Workshop, to lead the planning and design of Seattle’s first universally inclusive park. After extensive work engaging a diverse community, the end result is a totally unique park designed to be physically accessible and emotionally welcoming to all. Design elements reflect this commitment: the merry-go-round is flush to the ground for access, rainbow snags honor and welcome the LGBTQ+ community and the natural world, new restrooms have both toddler and adult-sized changing tables, and larger swings allow kids and their peers and caregivers to swing together. The total project cost was \$6.6 million which was made possible by a fiscal sponsorship from Seattle Parks Foundation and funding from SPR’s capital budget, King County, the State of Washington,



Be'er Sheva Park Grand Re-Opening

DON, private foundations and countless donors. Renamed Pathways Park by the community, the new space celebrates the many paths we can take to enjoy people and parks together.

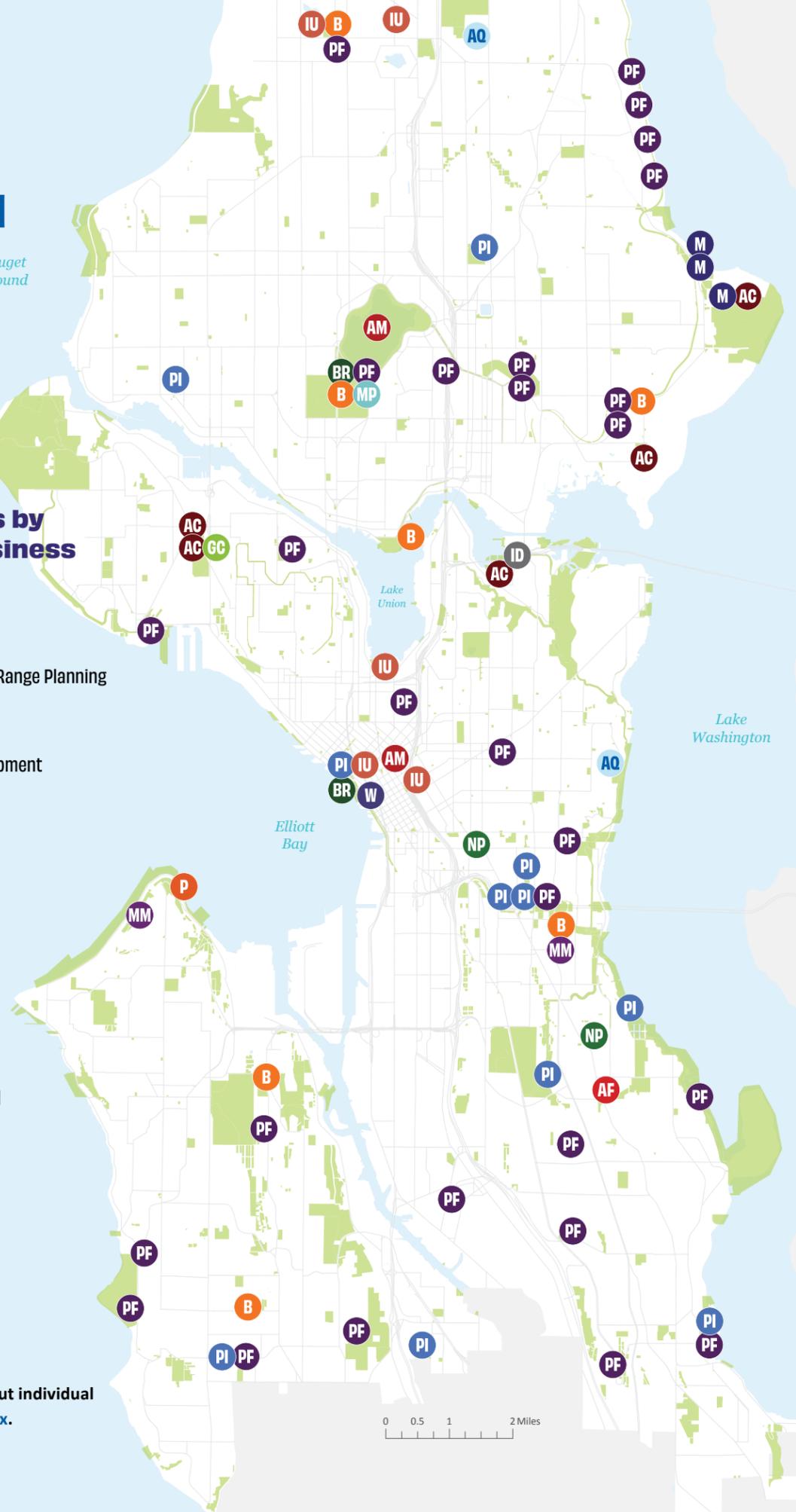
Across these efforts, our community partners were supported by other local giants in the community-building sphere. The Neighborhood Matching Fund provided seed funding to all three of these projects, and the Seattle Parks Foundation and the Associated Recreation Council played key roles as fiscal sponsors and project advisors. Just more evidence of the power of partnership to provide great parks!

89 Capital Projects Completed in 2024

Puget Sound

Completed Projects by Detailed Line of Business

- AQ Acquisition
- AC Accessibility and Compliance
- AM Asset Management and Long-Range Planning
- AF Athletic Fields
- BR Building Renovation or Development
- B Buildings
- GC Golf Capital Improvements
- IU Infrastructure and Utilities
- ID Irrigation and Drainage
- M Magnuson Park Buildings & Infrastructure
- MM Major Maintenance
- MP Major Projects Challenge Fund
- NP New Park Development
- PF Park Features
- PI Park Improvements
- P Pools and Aquatics
- W Waterfront Redevelopment



For more specific information about individual projects, see the detailed appendix.

Acknowledgements

Deep gratitude to all of SPR's many employees for their hard work for the community. Special thanks to the following people, for their contribution that made this Annual Report possible.

Program Staff and Subject Matter Experts

Amy Lindemuth
 Andre Franklin
 Asmita Poudel
 Barb Wade
 Collin Campbell
 Dave Belanger
 Deja'Nay Gilliam
 Hoda Gray
 Jacob Daley
 Jasmine Ridal
 Jeff Hodges
 Jewels Jugum
 Joy House
 Karen Galt
 Kerrie Stoops
 Kyle Griggs
 Lakema Bell
 Laura Wilburn
 Lisa Ciecko
 Mike Browne
 Mike Plympton
 Paige Reischl
 Rebecca Milliman
 Roma Shah
 Rommell Witherspoon
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 Temesgen Habte
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 Tim Pretare
 Temesgen Habte
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Oversight & Accountability in 2024

This concludes our annual report for 2024! For even more, please see the [Financial and Performance Appendix](#) for a comprehensive set of budget-to-actuals and key performance indicators on our entire operation. This report is only one of several things we do to stay accountable to residents and taxpayers. We are grateful to work with other key accountability partners, including the Office of City Auditor and the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners.

Partnering with the City Auditor on Park Restrooms

At the request of the [Park District Board](#), Seattle's City Auditor initiated a performance audit of SPR's park restrooms in 2024. It was no surprise to us that some of our 129 restrooms need additional attention—it's a regular source of public comment, they have experienced heightened levels of vandalism and arson in recent years, and we've planned for a variety of Cycle 2 investments to keep our restrooms cleaner and more available. In 2024, we completed major renovation on 4 restrooms, weatherized 8 for year-round use to prevent water pipes from freezing, and prioritized daily cleaning. SPR embraced the opportunity to get an outside perspective from the Auditor's office. In 2025 and beyond, we will be implementing recommendations, as well as continuing to renovate our oldest restrooms, trying out new materials and technologies to mitigate the impacts of vandalism, and enhancing restroom cleaning.

Residents Provide Critical Oversight

The Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners (BPRC) is a community advisory board that consults with and makes recommendations to the City Council, the Mayor, and the Superintendent regarding SPR's policies for the planning, development, and use of parks and facilities. It also provides oversight of the projects, programs, and services undertaken jointly by the City and the Seattle Park District, pursuant to the interlocal agreement between The City of Seattle and the Seattle Park District. Commissioners are volunteers and Seattle residents, and are appointed by the Mayor, the City Council, and several of the City's other advisory board and commissions.

In 2024, at full board meetings and subcommittee meetings, the BPRC's engagement and oversight supported SPR's ability to deliver services effectively and equitably. In 2024, SPR leadership and relevant staff updated the Commissioners on high profile topics such as the status of capital projects, recreation programs, the Park Inspection Program, and athletic field usage. The BPRC also provided formal recommendations to the Superintendent on several major issues including the 2024 Parks and Open Space Plan, the Off Leash Area Plan, and the Pickleball Plan.

BPRC members and SPR staff liaisons at the Ocean Pavilion at the Aquarium





Seattle
Parks & Recreation



#SeattleShines
seattle.gov/parks