

**Seattle Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners
Seattle Park District Cycle 2 Planning**

DRAFT CHAIRS' REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**By Jessica Farmer and Marlon Herrera
Co-Chairs, Seattle Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners**

May 5, 2022

INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present the draft report and recommendations from the Seattle Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners (or simply, the Board) for the 2023-2028 funding cycle of the Seattle Park District (see Appendix 1).

We are proud to serve in our roles as Commissioners on behalf of the public and we are excited to support a solid and comprehensive funding proposal designed to provide clean, safe and welcoming parks, enhance access, services and recreation programs, and invest in the future.

We would like to thank Seattle residents and voters for their support of the Park District when they approved 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 continue to inform our recommended decisions for the next cycle of proposed projects slated for 2023 to 2028. A summary of public comment for this process is included later in the report.

CONTEXT TO PRIORITIZATION

Planning for the Park District's second six-year cycle began in 2018 with the development of the department's [Strategic Plan](#), a comprehensive plan that guides Seattle Parks and Recreation's programming, services and investments from 2020 to 2032. In 2019 and 2020, SPR transitioned into planning for the Park District, but these efforts were interrupted and paused 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.

Prior to the Board prioritization process kicking off on March 24, SPR briefed the BPRC on baseline Park District investments (ongoing programs, services and capital programs supported by Park District revenues). The presentation clearly showed that baseline Park District funding is integral to SPR operating and capital budgets especially since multiple funding realignments were implemented during Cycle 1 to relieve the City's General Fund and address emergent needs. SPR shared that continuing this baseline level of service was estimated at \$58.3 million in 2023 dollars.

As the BPRC subcommittees prioritized strategies and proposals for Park District investment, the materials and discussion referenced these strategies as additive to SPR's baseline budget including the Park District baseline.

SPR also shared that they consider several projects to be “pre-commitments,” including capital investments deferred from Cycle 1, projects prior administrations or City Council have publicly committed to through legislation and/or the annual budget process, and other known obligations. SPR seeks BPRC input on project scope and scale of Park District funding for these pre-commitments but did not ask the BPRC to prioritize these investments against the new investments proposed as part of the subcommittee process. SPR estimates that to accomplish the pre-commitments, Park District support of approximately \$25 million in cash financing, \$110 million in debt issuance during Cycle 2 and an ongoing commitment towards operations and maintenance of approximately \$2 million - \$2.5 million per year would be needed.

At the drafting of this Chairs’ recommendation, the BPRC has not discussed the scope and scale of the SPR-identified pre-commitments. This discussion is planned for May 19 so that the BPRC can consider any additional public testimony from the May 12 public hearing related to these projects.

OVERVIEW OF PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

Though community engagement began with Strategic Plan development in 2018, the past six weeks involved allocating Park District dollars to specific priorities. From the last week in March through the end of April 2022, the BPRC embarked on a process to prioritize 41 funding proposals to support Seattle’s parks and recreation system. We were assisted by Seattle Parks and Recreation staff and informed by comments from members of the public. The proposals were divided into three sections that were reviewed and prioritized by three Board subcommittees.

The demands of Seattle’s parks and recreation system continue to exceed available resources; as a result, we are not able to fund everything we would like to in this cycle.

Subcommittees were established as follows:

- **Subcommittee 1: Enhancing Access and Services** included Commissioners Andréa Akita, Stafford Mays and Justin Umagat (Chair) and was facilitated by SPR’s Shanyanika McElroy
- **Subcommittee 2: Restoring Clean, Safe & Welcoming Parks** included Commissioners Amy Brockhaus, Pasqual, Contreras (Chair) and Kelly McCaffrey, and was facilitated by Hazel Bhang-Barnett
- **Subcommittee 3: Investing for the Future** included Commissioners Davon Thomas, Deepa Sivarajan (Chair), Sean Watts and Sophia Fuller, and was facilitated by Brian Judd

The subcommittees each met four times to review, discuss and prioritize the proposals under their purview. Subject Matter Experts from SPR were on hand to answer any questions Commissioners had about the proposals. At the April 28, 2022 meeting of the BPRC, the subcommittees presented their funding recommendations to the full Board.

In making their recommendations, Commissioners considered the following Guiding Principles:

- Relationships to SPR Strategic Plan, Action Plan and SPR values of Healthy People, Healthy Environment, Strong Communities and Organizational Excellence;
- Responses to parallel crises of public health and well-being, economic recovery and climate change;
- Role in advancing racial equity; and
- Other priorities such as community responsiveness and performance.

We were also mindful of the impact to taxpayers, given ongoing economic uncertainties and affordability challenges Seattle residents face and therefore scaling and prioritizing were an integral part of the process. We were committed to developing a proposal below the maximum levy authority (not requiring a public vote) in Cycle 2.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDING OPTIONS

We concur with the recommendations of the three subcommittees for Option A, totaling \$30 million. See Appendix 2 for the complete list of recommendations, funding amounts, and rationales for funding. The potential slate of new investments funding 41 proposals totaled \$42 million.

The one exception to our concurrence is that we recommend full funding (\$1.55M) for the Racket Sport Maintenance and Expansion proposal in consideration of pickleball's growing popularity in the city and region, and public comment during this prioritization process. After hearing community feedback – now and over the past few years – we know it is important to Seattleites that we expand the use of our tennis courts to accommodate pickleball. Not only is it the state sport, but it is accessible to elders and folks with diverse abilities. We recognize that fully funding this proposal puts us over our target investment budget, and we will consider the funding options with the full board in the context of additional public comment received on May 12.

In allocating Park District funds to specific proposals, Commissioners were challenged to develop Option B, a reduced \$15 million proposal, half the value of the proposal included in Option A. Through this process, we have identified our highest priorities. We strongly urge the adoption of the full \$30 million proposal, with these \$15 million in investments as the highest needs.

We also concur with subcommittee recommendations that the department and Board continue to leverage funding by advocating for cost-sharing among City and other governmental agencies, seeking grants from other county, state and federal agencies, and where possible, fund demonstration projects as a way to pave the way for more sustained funding.

If additional funding should become available we advocate more money for proposals involving increasing restroom access and maintenance, staff and public safety, supporting community center operations, the equity fund, and racket sports

As a way to prioritize funding, we would further recommend:

- Focusing on projects with high equity scores, benefiting historically underserved communities
- Adhering to the original vision of the Park District, which was instituted to fund a mix of capital, operations and maintenance needs
- Looking for opportunities for external funding or cost-sharing between government agencies
- Looking for investments that would have deep impacts at low-cost where possible - the highest "bang for our bucks"
- Looking for opportunities to increase equitable engagement and working directly with diverse communities around the projects

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The slate of possible investments the Board considered was guided by the robust public engagement SPR undertook in advance of its [Strategic Plan beginning in 2019](#), through a [statistically valid survey](#), Board meetings, community events and “Park and Rec Fests,” and in [2021 through concerted efforts](#) to hear from the communities it serves – particularly those who have been historically minoritized. Over two years, the planning effort engaged more than 10,000 people.

During the Parks District Cycle 2 Funding Prioritization process to date, the Board has received a large amount of correspondence – a total of more than 830 responses – through email; written questions submitted for the April 14 Board meeting; a Park District Planning Survey, and oral public comment for the March 24 and April 14 Board meetings. In addition, the Park District Planning Survey has received hundreds of responses. Written and verbal comments received equal attention from Board members.

[Placeholder for results of May 12 public hearing]

CONCLUSION

We want to express our deepest gratitude to Board subcommittee members for their time, expertise and hard work over the past few weeks in doing this complex and time-consuming work, mainly in the evening and on weekends. Our thanks, too, to SPR Subject Matter experts and the department’s excellent team of facilitators, which included Shanyanika McElroy, Hazel Bhang-Barnett, and Brian Judd. David Takami attended all of the meetings and took notes, and we are grateful for his time and support throughout this process.

We understand the next steps in the process involve further review and refinement by the SPR Superintendent, Mayor’s Office and City Council along with more public input. We look forward to that review and would be happy to answer any questions that may arise.

Appendix 1: Chairs Recommendation based on Subcommittee Recommended Target A

Appendix 2: Summary of Subcommittee Report Outs

Appendix 3: Proposed Budget Changes by BSL/Line of Business/Sub Line of Business

Appendix 4 – [Updated one-page descriptions of proposals to be added after May 19](#)

Appendix 1: Chairs Recommendation based on Subcommittee Recommended Target A

Strategy	Proposed Investment	Recommendation
Building Community Capacity	Equity Fund Increment (Capital)	1,000,000
	Inclusive Outreach & Engagement	605,000
	Seattle Conservation Corps Expansion	900,000
	Urban Food Systems	700,000
Building Community Capacity Total		3,205,000
Continuing to Fix it First	Magnuson Major Maintenance (Capital)	780,000
	Play Area Renewal (Capital)	1,062,500
	Pool Major Maintenance (Capital)	1,020,000
	Racket Sport Maintenance & Expansion (Capital)	1,550,000 886,950
Continuing to Fix it First Total		3,749,450
Developing & Enhancing Park Assets	Acquisition Funding (Capital)	350,000
	New Park Development (Capital)	1,800,000
	Smith Cove Phase 2 (Capital-\$6M annualized)	-
Developing & Enhancing Park Assets Total		2,150,000
Enhancing Life Safety & Regulatory Compliance	Accessibility Barrier Removal (Capital)	1,352,000
	Aquatics Safety	625,000
	Facility Maintenance Life Safety & Regulatory Compliance	977,500
	Human Resources Safety Compliance & Training	335,000
	Unreinforced Masonry (URM) Retrofits (Capital)	1,504,500
Enhancing Life Safety & Regulatory Compliance Total		4,794,000
Enhancing Recreation Facilities & Programming	Business Systems & Customer Service Unit	380,000
	Community Center Operations	3,700,000
	Custodial Support	400,000
	Environmental Education Enhancement	-
	Rec N the Streets	850,000
Enhancing Recreation Facilities & Programming Total		5,330,000
Expanding Youth Employment & Mentorship Opportunities	Teen Development Program	520,000
	Youth Mentorship & Employment Opportunities	400,000
Expanding Youth Employment & Mentorship Opportunities Total		920,000
Improving Park Safety & Activation	Neighborhood Park Activation	200,000
	Park Concierges	650,000
	Park Safety Program	850,000
Improving Park Safety & Activation Total		1,700,000
Increasing Access to Restrooms	Comfort Station Autolocking & Winterization	174,000
	Comfort Station Shelterhouse Renovations (Capital)	1,232,500
	Evening & Second Shift Maintenance	794,300
Increasing Access to Restrooms Total		2,200,800
Responding to Climate Change	Climate Conscious Buildings (Capital)	2,000,000
	Community Center Pre-Electrification	300,000
	Replacing Fossil Fuels in Small Mechanical Systems	300,000
	Restoring & Increasing Urban Canopy	400,000
	Sustainable Irrigation Replacement & Upgrade	330,000
	Water Reuse Partnerships	315,000
Responding to Climate Change Total		3,645,000
Restoring Parks & Facilities	Park Beautification	269,750
	Vandalism Response	633,250
	Viewpoints Maintenance	352,750
Restoring Parks & Facilities Total		1,255,750
Restoring Trails & Improving Access to Open Space	Trails Major Maintenance (Capital)	650,000
	Trails Program Support	400,000
	Trails, Connectivity and Access (Capital)	-
Restoring Trails & Improving Access to Open Space Total		1,050,000
Grand Total		30,663,050

Appendix 2: Summary of Subcommittee Report Outs

Strategy	Proposed Investment	Rationale	Sum of Option A: Subcommittee Recommendation	Option B
Building Community Capacity	Equity Fund Increment (Capital)	•Opportunity to shift a grant opportunity to rebalance historic access inequities. Highlights opportunities in areas where funding has been needed for decades. Explicit investments in community engaging & capacity building.	1,000,000	725,000
	Inclusive Outreach & Engagement	•All proposals surmount access barriers to dollars and community empowerment. Without outreach & engagement, these efforts don't go as far.	605,000	200,000
	Seattle Conservation Corps Expansion	•SPR plays a key role in existing harm on the SCC population in terms of homeless populations, acknowledging this is shared responsibility with other City departments. Investing in a program that potentially has a transformative impact.	900,000	500,000
	Urban Food Systems	•High equity score. Opportunity to expand community engagement. Offers capacity to develop climate resilience in food systems. Feeds communities, opportunities for gardening, and collaboration.	700,000	350,000
Building Community Capacity Total			3,205,000	1,775,000
Continuing to Fix it First	Magnuson Major Maintenance (Capital)	•Support public/private partnerships at Magnuson. Address capital improvement needs at a scalable pace. Park residents make it an equitable investment.	780,000	324,000
	Play Area Renewal (Capital)	•Explore grant funding to leverage. Expansion and single-use while there are system-wide unmet needs.	1,062,500	675,000
	Pool Major Maintenance (Capital)	•Pools needed. Acts as cooling centers in hot summers. Access to pools, swimming, & lessons is important. Also generate revenues.	1,020,000	648,000
	Racket Sport Maintenance & Expansion (Capital)	•Explore grant funding to leverage. Expansion and single-use while there are system-wide unmet needs.	1,550,000	403,210
Continuing to Fix it First Total			3,749,450	2,086,210
Developing & Enhancing Park Assets	Acquisition Funding (Capital)	•High equity score. New park development and acquisition funding are key to the Park District. Recommend high funding to fund languishing land bank sites.	350,000	150,000
	New Park Development (Capital)	•High equity score. New park development and acquisition funding are key to the Park District. Recommend high funding to fund languishing land bank sites.	1,800,000	750,000
	Smith Cove Phase 2 (Capital-\$6M annualized)	•Low equity score. Citywide value to developing this park. District & neighborhoods have access to seek funding sources outside MPD to prioritize areas with less access to private dollars.	-	-
Developing & Enhancing Park Assets Total			2,150,000	900,000
Enhancing Life Safety & Regulatory Compliance	Accessibility Barrier Removal (Capital)	•Accessibility is important. Need a steady investment to tackle the backlog.	1,352,000	561,600
	Aquatics Safety	•Life and Safety are very important. Fund at 100%.	625,000	625,000
	Facility Maintenance Life Safety & Regulatory Compliance	•Public infrastructure is woefully underfunded with a long backlog. Don't like "run to failure" due to the chronic underinvestment. This is scalable based on the level of funding.	977,500	621,000
	Human Resources Safety Compliance & Training	•Life and Safety are very important. Fund at 100%.	335,000	335,000
	Unreinforced Masonry (URM) Retrofits (Capital)	•Meet chronic underfunded infrastructure needs that don't get enough attention or resource. There is a possible funding leverage with FEMA.	1,504,500	955,800
Enhancing Life Safety & Regulatory Compliance Total			4,794,000	3,098,400
Enhancing Recreation Facilities & Programming	Business Systems & Customer Service Unit	•Would benefit all users of the system. Would also support oversight and maintenance of key customer-facing systems (i.e., ActiveNet)	380,000	230,000
	Community Center Operations	•Will increase drop-in activities and overall access to the communities they serve. Helping to reclassify support positions will also help with customer facing service as well as retention and equity issues.	3,700,000	1,570,000
	Custodial Support	•Will improve the user experience of program sites and is an essential pairing with the cc operations proposal.	400,000	275,000
	Environmental Education Enhancement	•With the availability of partnerships, the subcommittee chose to pursue other areas.	-	-
	Rec N the Streets	•In support of bringing recreation to the people and providing access to identified equity zones.	850,000	-

Strategy	Proposed Investment	Rationale	Sum of Option A: Subcommittee Recommendation	Option B
Enhancing Recreation Facilities & Programming Total			5,330,000	2,075,000
Expanding Youth Employment & Mentorship Opportunities	Teen Development Program	•In support targeting and developing the teenagers in our community. Scores high in equity; has positive impact on the future of our communities.	520,000	250,000
	Youth Mentorship & Employment Opportunities	•Systemwide investment benefits the communities we serve; also has potential to give youth an opportunity to build career skills and experience.	400,000	125,000
Expanding Youth Employment & Mentorship Opportunities Total			920,000	375,000
Improving Park Safety & Activation	Neighborhood Park Activation	•High return on investment; collaborates with those in the community willing to assist with each project/program.	200,000	-
	Park Concierges	•Helping users navigate parks & programs will increase user experience.	650,000	650,000
	Park Safety Program	•Ensuring parks are safe & inviting is a high priority for the subcommittees.	850,000	400,000
Improving Park Safety & Activation Total			1,700,000	1,050,000
Increasing Access to Restrooms	Comfort Station Autolocking & Winterization	•Dovetailed with the below proposals, scalable at a lower level. New technology may need more vetting.	174,000	-
	Comfort Station Shelterhouse Renovations (Capital)	•Critical public assets in high demand and scalable.	1,232,500	783,000
	Evening & Second Shift Maintenance	•Cleaner, accessible restrooms are in high demand and require work now. Scalable at lower level.	794,300	329,940
Increasing Access to Restrooms Total			2,200,800	1,112,940
Responding to Climate Change	Climate Conscious Buildings (Capital)	•Climate health & equity impact. Leverage funding for demo projects to seek outside funding. Lower equity impact, but still necessary for future climate mitigation.	2,000,000	850,000
	Community Center Pre-Electrification	•Lower equity impact, but still necessary for future climate mitigation.	300,000	-
	Replacing Fossil Fuels in Small Mechanical Systems	•Lower equity impact, but still necessary for future climate mitigation.	300,000	-
	Restoring & Increasing Urban Canopy	•High equity score. High impact with low funding. Opportunities for community engagement.	400,000	200,000
	Sustainable Irrigation Replacement & Upgrade	•Seek cost sharing opportunities and federal/state funding given global impacts and relevance to developing urban tree canopy.	330,000	125,000
	Water Reuse Partnerships	•Seek cost sharing opportunities and federal/state funding given global impacts and relevance to developing urban tree canopy.	315,000	150,000
Responding to Climate Change Total			3,645,000	1,325,000
Restoring Parks & Facilities	Park Beautification	•Important but more pressing needs.	269,750	112,050
	Vandalism Response	•Responding to vandalism works to reduce future vandalism. Involvement of SCC a plus.	633,250	402,300
	Viewpoints Maintenance	•Important public assets enabling those without views to enjoy. Tree maintenance is important; will get more expensive if not maintained.	352,750	224,100
Restoring Parks & Facilities Total			1,255,750	758,450
Restoring Trails & Improving Access to Open Space	Trails Major Maintenance (Capital)	•Keeping up with major maintenance aims to keep assets in a stage of good repair.	650,000	300,000
	Trails Program Support	•Will improve the access and safety for all trail users.	400,000	200,000
	Trails, Connectivity and Access (Capital)	•With higher potential to secure funds for capital projects through other grants, the subcommittee chose not to support this proposal.	-	-
Restoring Trails & Improving Access to Open Space Total			1,050,000	500,000
Grand Total			30,663,050	15,000,000

Appendix 3: Proposed Budget Changes by BSL/Line of Business/Sub Line of Business

BSL	Line of Business	Sub Line of Business	Proposed Budget Change	Total			
Fix it First (Capital)	Asset Management & Life Cycle Program	Accessibility and Compliance	Accessibility Barrier Removal (Capital)	1,352,000			
		Buildings	Climate Conscious Buildings (Capital)	2,000,000			
			Comfort Station Shelterhouse Renovations (Capital)	1,232,500			
			Unreinforced Masonry (URM) Retrofits (Capital)	1,504,500			
			Irrigation & Drainage	Sustainable Irrigation Replacement & Upgrade	330,000		
			Water Reuse Partnerships	315,000			
		Magnuson Park Buildings & Infrastructure	Magnuson Major Maintenance (Capital)	780,000			
			Park Features	Play Area Renewal (Capital)	1,062,500		
			Trails Major Maintenance (Capital)	650,000			
		Park Improvements	Racket Sport Maintenance & Expansion (Capital)	1,550,000			
		Pools & Aquatics	Pool Major Maintenance (Capital)	1,020,000			
		Fix it First (Capital) Total			11,133,450		
		Building for the Future (Capital)	Capital Development & Improvement	Equity Fund	Equity Fund Increment (Capital)	1,000,000	
				New Park Development	New Park Development (Capital)	1,800,000	
					Smith Cove Phase 2 (Capital-\$6M annualized)	-	
	Park Improvements		Trails, Connectivity and Access (Capital)	-			
Acquisition	Acquisition		Acquisition Funding (Capital)	350,000			
Building for the Future (Capital) Total				3,150,000			
Parks and Facilities Maintenance and Repairs	Tree Crew & Natural Areas	Natural Resource Maintenance	Restoring & Increasing Urban Canopy	400,000			
			Trails Program Support	400,000			
			Urban Food Systems	700,000			
	Grounds Maintenance	Grounds Maintenance	Evening & Second Shift Maintenance	794,300			
			Park Beautification	269,750			
			Viewpoints Maintenance	352,750			
			Emergency Management & Security Services	Park Safety Program	850,000		
	Capital Planning and Facilities Maintenance	Facility Maintenance	Comfort Station Autolocking & Winterization	174,000			
			Community Center Pre-Electrification	300,000			
			Custodial Support	400,000			
			Facility Maintenance Life Safety & Regulatory Compliance	977,500			
			Replacing Fossil Fuels in Small Mechanical Systems	300,000			
			Vandalism Response	633,250			
			Parks and Facilities Maintenance and Repairs Total			6,551,550	
			Recreation Facility Programs	Recreation Programming	Teen Programming	Teen Development Program	520,000
						Youth Mentorship & Employment Opportunities	400,000
				Recreation Facility Operations	Aquatics	Aquatics Safety	625,000
					Community Center Operations/Facility Maintenance	Community Center Operations	3,700,000
				Activation	Activation	Environmental Education Enhancement	-
Inclusive Outreach & Engagement	605,000						
Neighborhood Park Activation	200,000						
Park Concierges	650,000						
Rec N the Streets	850,000						
Recreation Facility Programs Total			7,550,000				
Leadership and Administration	Administration & Support	Administration & Support	Business Systems & Customer Service Unit	380,000			
			Human Resources Safety Compliance & Training	335,000			
		Seattle Conservation Corps	Seattle Conservation Corps Expansion	900,000			
Leadership and Administration Total			1,615,000				
Grand Total			30,663,050				