

SEATTLE PARKS AND RECREATION 2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

DRAFT

WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE BELIEVE

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) stewards a thriving and diverse system of parks, natural areas, community centers, boulevards, trails, playgrounds, fields and courts, pools, beaches, and so much more. This system has a rich history extending back over 135 years and plays an important role in keeping Seattle a dynamic and connected community as the city continues to grow and change. Our parks and recreation system connects Seattle's residents and visitors to nature, provides opportunities to stay healthy and improve well-being, and celebrates the vibrancy of our city.

OUR VISION

Healthy People
Healthy Environment
Strong Communities

OUR MISSION

Seattle Parks and Recreation provides welcoming and safe opportunities to play, learn, contemplate and build community, and promotes responsible stewardship of the land.

OUR VALUES

Equity
Opportunity
Access
Sustainability

WHY PLAN NOW?

Seattle has changed dramatically since Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) prepared its Parks Legacy Plan in 2014. Our city is facing increasing density, a growing wealth gap, and a continued homelessness crisis. Over the past five years, Seattle has grown by more than 105,000 new residents, over 110,000 new jobs, and over 44,000 housing units. Although median household income has risen by 44% over this time period, one in nine Seattle residents are living below the poverty line, and the number of individuals experiencing homelessness has increased by almost 20%. This growth is exacerbating existing livability, affordability, and transportation challenges for our residents, and placing additional strain on our parks, open spaces, and facilities. Our region continues to feel the impacts of climate change firsthand, and over the past five years we've experienced more high heat days, observed decreasing snowpack in the Cascades, and been subject to increasingly poor air quality from wildfire smoke. This changing context has underscored the need for SPR to provide affordable, accessible programming that helps maintain the livability of our city and the importance of safe, connected indoor and outdoor spaces for community to gather, to be active, and to connect with the natural environment. We need a new Strategic Plan that will guide our priorities and investments over the next twelve years.

As we consider how to tackle the challenges our city and our parks and recreation system are facing, we must recognize that communities of color who have been historically underserved – and often mis-served – are at greater risk of being further negatively impacted by these challenges. We must prioritize addressing historical racial inequity as we pursue opportunities to improve mental and physical health, combat climate change, plan for continued growth, and increase the vibrancy of our city. To help inform our next steps in balancing these pressures and opportunities, we decided to check in with community to ensure we are moving forward in a direction that will best serve Seattle's evolving needs. Continuing and deliberate community conversations allows us to touch base with residents about how priorities have evolved over the past few years and to adjust and course-correct our strategic direction and funding priorities.

PLANNING FOUNDATIONS

As we set out on the path to identify strategies to guide our investments, programming, and services, SPR framed our planning effort through several foundational principles:

Serving people: We create and implement programs and build and maintain great spaces and facilities to serve the needs of our residents. Our facilities, parks, open spaces, and other amenities must support our focus on meeting these resident needs.

Committing to racial equity: We will to focus on race and social justice in the way we plan, in the way we build, and the way we program.

Embracing new ways of doing things: The challenges our city and our residents face are new and so we must be open to the idea that the strategies we utilize to respond to these changes can't always be the same ones we've used before.

Honoring the diversity and history of our city, while also looking toward our future: All our work must be both sustainable and flexible to the city we are, and the one we are becoming.

Supporting solutions to citywide challenges.

Seattle Parks and Recreation prioritizes inclusiveness, affordability, innovation, accessibility, and livability as we seek to support comprehensive efforts to support Seattle residents.

Engaging with our community: We must engage in ongoing discourse with our community to ensure we can be responsive to the constant change that affects our residents.

Responding to climate change: The effects of climate change are being felt in our city, in our communities, and in our parks. We must work to mitigate these effects on our natural environment and protect those most vulnerable. Equally, we must adapt our operations to mitigate our impact, and use our spaces, staff, and influence to promote responsible stewardship of Seattle's resources.

Delivering excellent service: We need to build and maintain internal capacity in order to deliver excellent service in all aspects of our work, and innovate to deliver best and next practices to our residents

PATHWAY TO EQUITY

SPR is committed to advancing the City of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative and we are unveiling a new way to do this work called Pathway to Equity. The Pathway to Equity is a roadmap for SPR to help end institutional and structural racism and achieve racial equity in Seattle.

PATHWAY TO EQUITY VISION

Seattle Parks and Recreation envisions programs, policies, and funding that create equitable outcomes, as well as strategies and actions that show measurable results toward our vision of healthy people, a healthy environment, and strong communities.

OUR COMMITMENT TO AN EQUITABLE PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

SPR will work to undo racism and build racial equity, gender equity, and social justice in our programs and services. We recognize that inequities and disparities continue to exist with the perpetuation of institutionalized racism through white supremacy culture characteristics. Therefore, we will act boldly on dismantling these characteristics to create a culture centered in equity and social justice norms.

[Callout Box] What is white supremacy culture?

White supremacy culture is the idea that the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of White people are superior to those of People of Color, and therefore dominant in our social systems. White supremacy culture characteristics include: perfectionism, a sense of urgency, defensiveness, quantity over quality, worship of the written word, only one right way, paternalism, either/or thinking, power hoarding, fear of open conflict, individualism, belief that I'm the only one (who can do this 'right', the belief that progress is bigger and more, a belief in objectivity, and claiming a right to comfort. To dismantle white supremacy culture, institutions need to question typical characteristics of this culture and make space for other cultural norms and standards.

Adopting antidotes rooted in equity and social justice norms in workplace practices positions organizations to shift the culture of knowingly and unknowingly showing privilege to these institutionalized professionalism standards.

We will use an equity lens in our decision-making and our planning, and we will implement strategies to focus on disrupting injustice and inequity. Our focus is equity (the distribution of resources that takes into account past history and current position, so that future outcomes are fairly distributed), and **not** equality (the distribution of resources so that all receive the same amount regardless of past history, current position or future outcome).

We are committed to bring park and recreation resources to those who have been overlooked and underserved by discriminatory policies, practices, and histories.

Our Pathway to Equity begins with policy and procedure review, workforce development, developing the use of a racial equity lens when planning and budgeting, staff training, and increased accountability to communities of color.

Each of the four priorities in this Strategic Plan is paired with a step in SPR's Pathway to Equity. We believe that by leading with equity, not equality, in our strategic planning, SPR can best serve our community, today, and in the future.

[Callout Box] STEPS WE'RE TAKING NOW

- Developing an SPR Equity and Engagement Plan to implement the City's equity goals.
- Developing an equity scorecard for resource allocation and planning that leverages data to identify and address disparities in underserved areas and for underserved groups.
- Revamping SPR's Race and Social Justice Initiative Outcomes, Strategies, and Actions (ROSA) to more intentionally ensure an equity lens is woven throughout our work.
- Holding trainings and discussions throughout SPR that reach all staff.
- Conducting robust and culturally responsive community outreach.
- Developing an equity dashboard and performance indicators as part of department-wide performance management efforts.

WHAT WE OFFER

SPR provides a wide range of facilities, programs, and infrastructure across our system. Below is a snapshot of some of the spaces and services we use to bring communities together, get people active, and connect them with nature.



26 community centers



Environmental education
(nature walks, writing,
camps, and more)



2,755 acres of urban forest
slated for restoration



10 swimming pools
(8 indoor, 2 outdoor)



151 children's play areas



485 parks and over
6,400 acres of parkland
and open space



3 urban farms
8 orchards
&
12 community gardens



Sports, arts, fitness, and
swimming programs for
children, teens, adults,
seniors, and people with
disabilities



32 wading pools and
spray parks



223 basketball hoops



140 outdoor tennis courts
&
93 pickleball courts



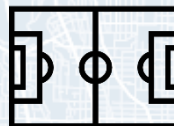
23 facilities offering before
& after school care



120 miles of trails



Cooking and life skills
classes, field trips, and
special events



207 athletic fields



1 Zoo
&
1 Aquarium



131 public restrooms



43 picnic shelters



Job readiness programs,
leadership development &
apprenticeships



14
off-leash areas

WHERE WE'RE GOING

Healthy People

WHAT WE KNOW:

- *Regular exercise and fitness activities are critical to our health.*
- *All ages benefit from healthy habits and teaching them from an early age can help establish life-long healthy eating and exercise patterns.*
- *Spending time outdoors improves our physical and mental health.¹*
- *Recess time increases physical activity and improves education performance.*
- *Significant physical and operational barriers to access exist across our public facilities.*
- *Many people in our communities experience food insecurity, or the uncertainty of having enough food to feed family members.²*
- *Low-income communities face significant challenges accessing affordable health care and are disproportionately uninsured, have the greatest reported unmet medical needs, and highest rates of incomplete vaccinations.³*
- *Adults are living longer and are at higher risk of social isolation, which poses significant risks to cognitive function, longevity, and quality of life.⁴*
- *Access to and a sense of safety around water for recreation and leisure activities is crucial to Seattle residents.*

[Sidebar] State of Play Report: A September 2019 analysis jointly conducted by King County, the University of Washington, and the Aspen Institute on how well youth are being served through sports, play, and outdoor recreation in Seattle/King County offered several key findings:

- *Only 19% of youth in King County meet the 60 minutes of physical activity per day recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*
- *Infrastructure such as fields, facilities, and transportation cannot meet demand to support youth physical activities and youth, parents, and community leaders say it is difficult to find space for free, unscheduled play.*
- *13% of youth haven't participated in organized sports or physical activities because they were too expensive.*

[Call-out Box] CONNECTION TO PATHWAY TO EQUITY:

Striking Disparities: *Low income communities of color in our region face disproportionate health disparities. Lack of access to affordable health care and healthy food can increase risk for health conditions that disproportionately impact these communities, including obesity and chronic diseases like diabetes.⁵ People of color, particularly children of color, also face disparities related to water safety and have an increased risk of drowning.⁶*

SPR's Commitment: We will focus our work in a way that eliminates racial health disparities.

OUR CITYWIDE VISION FOR A HEALTHY POPULATION

Healthy people are active and moving around, feel safe and welcomed in public spaces across the city, have access to affordable, fresh food, and practice healthy habits that prevent disease and enhance physical and mental well-being.

OUR IMPACT: As we consider the levers of change SPR can use to empower healthy people, we envision a parks and recreation system in which Seattle residents and visitors:

- *have access to recreational opportunities across our whole system, outside and inside, and in publicly- and privately-owned facilities and open spaces;*
- *feel safe in all parks, trails, recreation facilities, and around water;*
- *feel connected to and are active in nature;*
- *participate in programming that builds healthy habits – from getting people moving to providing fresh, nutritious food; and*
- *can visit parks and facilities that are inclusively designed, sustainably maintained, and well-connected to other public spaces.*

OUR STRATEGIES: What steps will we take to ensure a healthy Seattle population?

- Provide a comprehensive portfolio of programs and activities that promote physical and mental wellness for children, youth, adults, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- Make all parks, facilities and programs accessible and inclusive, utilizing universal design principles with the goal of including people of all ages and abilities.
- Maintain a high-quality, physically accessible system of spaces and facilities for community to gather, learn, recreate, and become healthy.
- Ensure residents and visitors know about the different ways they can get moving and be active in our parks, natural areas, trails, pools, and community centers.
- Prioritize land acquisitions and park enhancements to ensure that all Seattle residents live within a 10-minute walk from an activated public space or high-quality program.
- Increase connectivity within our system.
- Connect children, youth, and adults to nature.
- Improve equity and effectiveness across our community center system by redesigning our community center operations and programming and reexamining our current approach to geographic placement of community centers.
- Get the most out of our current parks and facilities by converting single-use spaces into multi-functional spaces in order to serve more people within our system, including converting tennis courts into multi-sport courts, adding additional paved pathways, and updating parks to meet changing community needs.
- Build food security and enhance the resilience of our urban food system by creatively using our spaces and programming to increase access to and distribution of fresh, affordable food and nutrition education.

Healthy Environment

WHAT WE KNOW:

- *Human activities such as urbanization, destruction of forest resources and biodiversity, and increased emissions from burning coal, gas, and oil have caused changes to our climate and ecosystems.*
- *Climate change has increased the occurrence of extreme weather events and environmental catastrophes such as flooding, wildfires, and droughts.*
- *As one of the largest property owners in the city, SPR's parks, open spaces, and healthy urban forests provide crucial ecosystem services including stormwater management, carbon sequestration, clean air and water, and wildlife habitat.*
- *Public assets such as the Woodland Park Zoo and the Seattle Aquarium contribute to community understanding of climate change and its impact on our oceans and on the world's animal species.*

[Sidebar] Impacts of Climate Change in Seattle

- *Wildfire smoke created diminished air quality with 24 days of poor air quality in both 2017 and 2018.⁷*
- *Extreme heat days above 85 degrees from May to August totaled 27 in 2017 and increased to 32 in 2018. The historical average in Seattle is 10 days per year.⁸*
- *Seattle is predicted to experience 10 inches of sea level rise by 2050, 28 inches by 2100, and 47 inches by 2150.⁹*

[call-out box] CONNECTION TO PATHWAY TO EQUITY:

Striking Disparities: In the U.S., people of color, low-income communities, and tribal populations have been disproportionately exposed to environmental conditions that can harm their health. Across the country, race is the most significant predictor of a person living near contaminated air, water, or soil, and in the Puget Sound region, sources of industrial pollution are disproportionately located near communities of color.¹⁰ In Seattle's Duwamish Valley, residents are likely to have higher exposure to noise pollution, air pollution, and highways and lower access to environmental benefits like open space.¹¹

Our Commitment: We will seek to minimize the impacts of climate change on those most vulnerable and use an environmental justice lens to prioritize the health and well-being of communities.

OUR CITYWIDE VISION FOR A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Seattle is a national leader in mitigating climate change impacts, stewarding and protecting its urban forests and natural spaces, promoting environmental responsibility and environmental justice, and building resilient infrastructure.

OUR IMPACT: As we consider the levers of change SPR can use to ensure a healthy environment, we envision a parks and recreation system with:

- *a thriving ecosystem where everyone has equitable use of, and responsibility for, public spaces;*
- *a healthy urban forest that cleans the air and soil and serves as a natural sanctuary for people and wildlife;*
- *green infrastructure that builds resiliency by adapting to shifting weather patterns and sea level rise;*
- *buildings and facilities that are not only carbon-neutral, but energy-producing;*
- *community programming that instills knowledge about our ecosystem and connects residents to their natural environment;*
- *community stewards who care for the parks and recreation system and help SPR protect it for future generations; and*
- *a healthy ocean and marine environment that contribute to the health of the Seattle and Pacific Northwest ecosystem.*

OUR STRATEGIES: What steps will we take to ensure a healthy environment?

- Manage our water resources sustainably in the face of climate change impacts through smart irrigation, stormwater management, preventative maintenance, water conservation and reuse, plant selection, and landscape management.
- Reduce waste through recycling, composting, and responsible sourcing at community centers, administrative buildings, events, pools, and other facilities.
- Require waste reduction efforts for our tenants, partners, and community through education and programming.
- Implement Seattle's Climate Action Plan by investing in infrastructure needed to support decarbonization and reduce energy use in our existing parks, recreation facilities, and pools and in any new construction projects.¹²
- Operate a parks and recreation system that is carbon neutral by 2050.
- As we approach Green Seattle Partnership's urban forest restoration goal, develop new targets that establish a sustainable balance between restoration and maintenance of forests, forest canopy, natural areas, open spaces and ecological functions with a focus on wildlife habitat.
- Responsibly develop new parks and facilities that balance recreation needs and best environmental practices.
- Preserve existing parkland to improve individual and community well-being as our city grows, and honor the heritage of our green space, including native history and our system's Olmsted legacy.
- Work to make SPR's facilities available year-round in response to climate change impacts such as extreme heat, smoke, and snow.
- Improve connectivity in our system by enhancing parks, open space, and trails in partnership with other City agencies and community organizations.
- Innovate and investigate strategies and technologies to support resiliency and further combat effects of climate change, such as solar panels and geothermal wells.
- Instill an appreciation of the natural environment through programming, events, and volunteerism to ensure future generations benefit from and continue to steward our natural assets.
- Continue to acquire land to increase availability of open space, developed parks, and other facilities.

Strong Communities

WHAT WE KNOW:

- *Being part of a connected community can positively impact mental health, well-being, and foster a sense of belonging and social cohesion.*
- *The City's wealth gap continues to grow, and many residents have not benefitted from the region's economic growth. This has resulted in an affordable housing crisis, which is a primary driver of homelessness.*
- *Approximately one in ten Seattle residents are living in poverty.¹³*
- *Most of the Puget Sound region's unsheltered population live in Seattle. Families and children make up a sizable portion of that population.*
- *Affordable, equitable, and high-quality early learning opportunities can result in lifelong positive impacts.¹⁴*
- *Partners and volunteers can expand the reach of public services and engage residents and community organizations in stewardship of our resources and community assets.*
- *Gaining early job experience can positively impact future job prospects and financial stability.*

[Call-out box] CONNECTION TO PATHWAY TO EQUITY:

Striking Disparities: Race-based disparities pervade our communities. In Seattle, White household income is more than twice that in Black/African American households.¹⁵ The White/Black achievement gap in third grade is 3.7 grade levels, White students graduate high school at significantly higher rates than students of color,¹⁶ and students of color have a higher probability of disengagement from work and school than White and Asian youth statewide.¹⁷ Black/African American youth are unemployed at twice the Citywide rate,¹⁸ and make up almost half the population in youth detention.¹⁹

Our Commitment: We will strengthen outreach and engagement opportunities while increasing opportunities for communities of color to have access to services that address these disparities and that are culturally and linguistically responsive.

OUR CITYWIDE VISION FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES

A strong Seattle community affords universal access to housing, living-wage jobs, education, and safe spaces to congregate and forge social connections. Children have support for successes in school and in life, adults have access to employment and economic opportunity, and all ages feel part of a connected, vibrant city.

OUR IMPACT: As we consider the levers of change SPR can use to strengthen communities, we envision a parks and recreation system in which:

- *we support citywide efforts to address the crises of affordability, growing economic disparity, and homelessness;*
- *everyone has access to affordable, culturally relevant educational, recreation, and arts programming;*
- *we provide services and programs that build community cohesion, life skills, and life-long learning;*
- *we provide programs and facilities that serve as community gathering opportunities year-round and provide safe spaces when needed; and*
- *we connect youth in the hope stage of development, link young people to role models, and provide support needed to take risks, fail, and try again.*

OUR STRATEGIES: What steps will we take to build strong communities?

- Help students succeed in life through extended academic instruction and access to enrichment opportunities.
- Contribute to Seattle’s goal of providing universal pre-school and support families with out-of-school time child-care and programming.
- Reevaluate our fee structure and scholarship model and increase free programming to eliminate socioeconomic barriers to our services.
- Leverage our grant-making programs as opportunities to build community capacity and identify pathways to funding community-driven programs and projects.
- Make parks safer by increasing neighborhood programming and working with community to identify priorities such as increased public presence through community-led activities, additional lighting where appropriate, needle disposal boxes, animal control, and increased frequency of maintenance.
- Strengthen the City’s efforts to uplift unsheltered persons through expanding parks-based job training opportunities and enhanced cleaning of unsanctioned encampments.
- Enhance the city’s sense of community by offering a range of public events that reflect Seattle’s growth and vibrancy, are strategically distributed, programmatically diverse, and build on existing successful community cultural events.
- Increase public awareness about our offerings and streamline registration systems to ensure equitable access.
- Reexamine our approach to all types of community-based and public agency partnerships to supplement our work in meeting needs of community members.
- Strengthen our infrastructure supporting volunteer efforts.
- Enhance opportunities for participation in the green economy through job training, apprenticeships, and employment.
- Build community by bringing people together to gather in, connect with, and activate private and public spaces.
- Double the size of our Seattle Conservation Corps.
- Prioritize cleanliness and safety and increase operating hours at public restrooms in our parks and facilities.
- Increase communication and outreach about SPR’s programs and places to better inform the public about our programs and leisure activities, and the breadth of parks and recreation facilities.

Organizational Excellence

WHAT WE KNOW:

- *Seattle's population has grown by almost a quarter since 2010.^{20,21}*
- *There is more demand on our parks and recreation system than ever.*
- *Delivery of excellent service requires a strong workforce connected to our mission and engaged in decision-making, effective organizational supports, and adequate resources.*
- *Consistently adopting advances in technology and process improvements enhance organizational performance.*
- *Transparency and accountability are fundamental principles for good governance and community trust.*
- *SPR has an important role to play in crafting city-wide solutions to affordability and livability challenges.*

[Call-Out Box] CONNECTION TO PATHWAY TO EQUITY:

Striking Disparities: The City of Seattle has historically played a role in exacerbating racial disparities through redlining and other discriminatory practices. It is part of our role as public servants to recognize this history and take responsibility for changing our policy and practices to prioritize serving those who have historically been harmed and/or denied access.

Our Commitment: We will allocate resources strategically through a racial equity framework to prioritize local communities most impacted by structural racism, utilizing an equity scorecard with identified equity zones, and shifting cultural norms to first provide resources to those who need them most. We will conduct workforce development and training that places SPR in a position of accountability to end disparities in recruitment, hiring, retention, and professional development. We will evaluate and modify contracting policies to support these equity goals.

OUR CITYWIDE VISION FOR ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

The City of Seattle is managed by a world-class local government that has a high quality, well-trained workforce that operates with a focus on excellence and professionalism, collaborates with community and partners, equitably delivers essential services, adapts to changing best practices, and embraces new technology and innovative ideas.

OUR IMPACT: As we consider the levers of change SPR can use to grow our internal capacity to deliver excellent service, we envision:

- *decision-making grounded in principles of racial equity and targeted at dismantling systemic racism;*
- *deliberate and ongoing engagement with our communities to ensure our facilities and services match their evolving needs;*
- *recruiting, training, and developing a team committed to providing excellent public service;*
- *expanded opportunities for youth job training, internships, and apprenticeships that can lead to fulfilling careers;*
- *participating in a collaborative, seamless citywide team that tackles pressing challenges;*
- *prioritizing responsiveness, transparency, accountability, and fiscal responsibility;*
- *an organizational structure that prioritizes inclusive decision-making and continual process improvement;*
- *an effective community advisory structure that provides a meaningful forum for discussion and input;*
- *aligning SPR's programs and service within the context of citywide needs; and*
- *having the resources to do our work well.*

OUR STRATEGIES: What steps will we take to build organizational excellence?

- Develop and implement an equity analysis process for decision-making to ensure our programs and services are eliminating racial disparities, meeting our residents' needs, and reducing socioeconomic barriers to access. This analysis would center on the development of a map and other key metrics that identify where disparities exist within our city and our system.
- Prioritize investments and services in historically underserved communities.
- Be a standard of excellence in our management and stewardship of Seattle's parks and recreation system by becoming a nationally accredited and award-winning parks and recreation agency.
- Manage SPR's organizational capacity by ensuring we are appropriately staffed and resourced, continually planning on a six to twelve-year horizon, and well-positioned to adapt to future needs.
- Build and sustain a strong workforce by recruiting, retaining, and developing staff and leadership that represent the communities we serve.
- Pilot new technologies and update our systems to enhance our organizational performance and accountability to the public through better use of data and data-informed analysis.
- Make our public-facing systems more user friendly and streamlined (e.g., program registration, event scheduling, permitting, mobile-friendly web content, etc.).
- Be responsive to community by listening for barriers to access, emerging interests, trends, and the needs of vulnerable populations through regular planning and ongoing engagement.
- Focus staff training on RSJI and equity and regularly review areas where additional training is needed to serve our changing population.
- Enhance our ability to efficiently and effectively provide programs and services by staffing up, investing in training to support direct services and operations, and fostering collaborative, supportive relationships between administrative and front-line functions.
- Continuously pilot and adopt new, innovative practices, designs, and programs.
- Regularly re-evaluate existing policies and plans to challenge the status-quo and better serve our changing population.
- Collaborate among SPR divisions, with city-wide teams, and other public and private partners to address issues related to livability, affordability, homelessness, and the environment.
- Explore a new structure for SPR's advisory committees (e.g., the Board of Park Commissioners, Park District Oversight Committee, Advisory Councils, and "Friends of" groups) to maximize engagement opportunities and efficiency.

- Steward our facilities and infrastructure through a full life cycle-based approach and prioritize preventative maintenance to extend the lifespan of our assets and facilities.
- Provide an appropriate number of facilities such as public restrooms to support park activation.
- Use technology to adapt and expand recreation opportunities across generations and stay current for future generations.

DRAFT

APPENDIX I:

- Planning: Past, Present, Future
- What We Do and Who We Serve
- Engagement Summary and Outcomes

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PLANNING: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

PLANNING CONTEXT

This Strategic Plan builds upon years of planning in Seattle that began with two critical events: first, the establishment of the Parks and Recreation Department in the late 1800s, and the creation of plans (1903 and 1908) for an interconnected, comprehensive system of parks, boulevards, and facilities. Over the following decades, the park system has been expanded to accommodate the growing population and changing community needs. As our system has evolved, SPR has conducted regular high-level and targeted planning efforts to guide and direct our work. Some foundational plans and recent planning efforts include:

PAST PLANS

1884-1900: Seattle's park system initiated with Denny Park donation, Board of Park Commissioners established, and development of the first comprehensive plan

1903-1908: Olmsted Brothers develop plans for a connected system of parks, boulevards, and playgrounds

1994: Seattle's first comprehensive plan under the state's Growth Management Act

CURRENT PLANS: GROWING AND MAINTAINING THE SYSTEM

Guiding Documents

2014: Parks Legacy Plan set strategic direction and set vision, mission, and values. Contributed to the passage of the Seattle Park District.

2016: Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan City's 20-year vision and roadmap for Seattle's future, including a new Parks and Open Space element

2017: Parks and Open Space Plan (2017) outlined goals, policies, action steps, and levels of service for open space and selected facilities.

Implementation and Operations Plans

2016

- Recreation Demand Study
- Community Center Strategic Plan
- People, Dogs and Parks Strategic Plan
- Maintenance Division Evaluation

2017

- Draft Soft Surface Trails Management Plan

2018

- Recreation Division Evaluation
- Park District Mid-Cycle Report

2019

- Draft Urban Food Systems Study
- Community Center Strategic Plan Refresh
- Planning & Development Division Evaluation

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

2019

Strategic Plan building on plans conducted in past five years and setting forth strategic direction through 2032.

Task Force reports on key topics such as trails, Olmsted legacy, views, and athletic fields to provide direction for the next decade.

2019-2020: Park District 2021-2026 financial priority development.

2023-2024: Parks & Open Space Plan renewal.

Ongoing: Community engagement, and planning for different

WHAT WE DO & WHO WE SERVE

SPR's services and programs span a wide range of locations, topics, and activities. We have something for everyone, from tot treks to swimming programs for seniors – and so many things in between. The following inventory is intended to showcase the breadth of SPR's public-facing services – it is not completely comprehensive but provides a snapshot of what SPR offers and how our programs and services work to support our departmental vision.

Healthy People

Why:	<i>We believe that healthy people live in a balanced state of physical, mental, and social well-being.</i>
Where & How:	Swimming beaches (lifeguarded in the summer) • Access to water sports (boating, sailing, rowing, stand up paddle boarding, etc.) • Golf Courses (4 public facilities + 1 Pitch n' Putt course) • Hiking & Trails (120 miles) • 25 miles of boulevards • 10 swimming pools • 32 wading pools and spray parks (open and lifeguarded in summer) • 25 indoor toddler play areas • 140 outdoor tennis courts • 2 indoor tennis centers • 93 pickleball courts • 207 athletic fields • 223 Basketball hoops • Golf course walking trails • 11 skateparks • 2 stadiums • 151 children's play areas • Bicycle Sundays • 13 outdoor fitness centers • 18 Fishing piers
Who & What:	<p>Youth & Teens: Sailing • Rowing • Crew • Volleyball • Flag Football • Cross Country • Basketball • Track and Field • Tennis • Ultimate Frisbee • Lacrosse • Soccer • Martial Arts • Dance Classes • Cooking classes • Late Night • Rock the Park • Summer of Safety • Family Swim • Water fun • Swim lessons • Swim team prep • Swim league • Diving • Jr. Lifeguarding • Synchronized swimming • Water polo • Homeschool lessons • Personal lessons • Field trip programs for schools • Teen Top Chef • Summer Food service program • Preschool programs • Before/After school care</p> <p>Adults: All gender swim event • Lap Swim • Adult Swim • Women only swim • Shallow water fitness • Deep water fitness • Hydro-fit • Stretch N Flex • Aqua Zumba • Adult Swim Lessons • Aqua Jog • Masters Workout • Improve your balance • Drop-in adult basketball • Adult softball leagues • Men's flag football • Women's flag football • Women's roller derby • Pickleball tournaments • Drop-in pickleball • Lawn bowling • Tennis • Boating • Martial Arts • Get Moving and Rec for All programs (culturally relevant, community-led fitness opportunities) • Community kitchens</p> <p>Seniors: Senior Swim • Arthritis Water Program • Northwest Senior Games • Dementia friendly recreation (field trips, dance, art, walks, fitness, volunteering) • LGBTQ programs (fitness, discussions, writing, movie night, trips, art, tai chi, gentle yoga) • Aerobics • Arthritis Exercise • Body Conditioning • Chinese Dance • Circuit Training • Exercise to improve balance • Minds in Motion • Nia • Parkinson's programs • Pilates • Chair classes • Tai Chi • Dance (Tap, Thriller, World Beat, Line Dancing) • Yoga • Zumba • Sports (Badminton, Pickleball, Table Tennis, Volleyball) • Field trips (Nature walks, seasonal trips, art/culture, lunch club) • Special events (lectures, informational classes related to senior health) • Sound steps walking program</p> <p>Specialized Programs: Sports (basketball, track & field, softball, golf, flag football, swimming, bowling) • Yoga • Afterschool programs • Aquatics • Cooking class • Dance • H.E.A.L.T.H (Healthy eating Active Living Today Hooray!) • Walking groups • Fitness Classes • Special Olympics</p>

Healthy Environment

Why:	<i>We believe a healthy environment is a thriving ecosystem where everyone has equitable use of, and responsibility for, public spaces.</i>
Where & How:	12% of Seattle's land • 6,434 acres of open space • 485 parks • 2,755 acres of urban forest slated for restoration • 350 plant species • 31 terrestrial and marine mammal species • 225 bird species • 12 electric staff vehicles and charging stations • 4 Environmental Learning Centers • Over 1 million volunteer hours through the Green Seattle Partnership • Over 2,800 pounds of edible produce harvested on park land • 4 cleaner indoor air spaces at community centers • 2 specialty gardens • 236 guided tours at the Japanese Garden • 2241 public trash cans • 330 public recycling bins • 531,595 plants and 123,277 trees planted since the establishment of the Seattle Park District • 1 Arboretum • 12 Community gardens • 3 Urban Farms • 30 P-patch programs • 8 Park orchards • 1 Zoo • 1 Aquarium • 1 plant conservatory • 1 Audubon Center • 1 Bee City USA Certification • Urban Bird Treaty City • 2 public electric vehicle charging stations • 23 community centers converted to tubular LED technology • 4 small facilities converted from fossil-fuel burning heat to electric heat pumps • 2 solar panel installations • 1 Water Shortage Contingency Plan in place • 235 properties with weather-attuned, automated irrigation stations • Operational targets and priorities established by intra-departmental team • SPR Irrigation team • SPR Best Maintenance Practices and Policies • SPR Vegetation Management Policies
Who & What:	<p>Youth & Teens: O2 Outdoor expedition programs • Tidepool walks • Nature at Night • Mushroom walks • Tot treks • Birding • Nature Camps • Writing in the wild • Nature walks • Beach walks • Wildlife walks • Junior Naturalist Program • Salmon Stewards Program • School partnerships • Youth Green Corps</p> <p>Adults: Green Seattle Partnership • Forest Stewards • Seattle Urban Nature Guides • Friends of Groups • EarthCorps Volunteers • Trail Restoration Volunteer Opportunities • Park and Specialty Garden Volunteer Maintenance • Seattle Volunteer Naturalists • Magnuson Nature Docents • Guided Nature Walks • Urban Food Systems Education Programs</p>

Strong Communities

Why:	<i>We believe strong communities are supportive, vibrant, share a sense of identity and feed positively connected to their public spaces.</i>
Where & How:	26 Community Centers • 3 Teen Life Centers • Over 75 indoor meeting facilities • 13 special amenity sites (reserved 345 times as of August 2019) • 43 picnic shelters (average of 737 events per year) • 11 bathhouses • 7 ballot drop boxes in parks or at community centers • 3 museums • 131 public restrooms • \$1.7 million in school-age care and preschool scholarships in 2019 • \$750,000 in recreation scholarships in 2019 • Over 130 art pieces • 5 amphitheaters • 14 Off Leash Dog Parks • 3 public marinas • 54 landmarked buildings • 6 visual and performing art facilities • 1 outdoor sculpture park • 11 indoor and 14 outdoor preschool sites • 23 facilities offering before/after school care in 2019 (some SPR, some SPS) • Children in Nature Network Membership • National Parks and Recreation Association Membership • Washington Parks and Recreation Association Membership • City Park Alliance Membership • Over 65 community meetings anticipated in 2019 • Comfort Station Emphasis • Encampment Cleanups • Evening and Weekend Maintenance Shifts • Park Maintenance Jamborees • Trails Maintenance Program • Park Security Program • 20 administrative offices, crew quarters, and shops
Who & What:	<p>Youth & Teens: Children’s theater performances • Spring egg hunts • Halloween festivities • Summer Carnivals • Back to School events • Teen Summer Musical • Youth Employment Program • Youth Summer Learning Program • Teen Late Nights • Youth Engagement Programs • Mock Trial Program • After school programs • Preschool programs • Outdoor preschool • Summer programs and camps • Music Instruction • My Brother’s Keeper and My Sister’s Keeper • Job Readiness classes • Life skills training • Leadership development • Cooking classes • Art classes • STEM programs • Teen Advisory Council • Homeschool Classes • Service Learning Hours • Youth Green Corps • Center City Programs (Arts and Crafts, Outdoor Movies, Storytelling, Family Fun)</p> <p>Adults: Outdoor Movie Nights • Neighborhood Night Out events • Art in Parks Program • Park Concierge Program • Parks Commons Program • Center City Programs (Happy Hours, Outdoor Movies, Concerts, Gardening, Fitness, Games, Books) • Seattle Conservation Corps • Japanese Garden Tea Ceremonies • Community harvests and festivals • Community Kitchens • Parent’s Night out programs • Pottery facilities and classes • Self Defense programs • Music Instruction • Coaching and Refereeing opportunities • Computer Facilities and classes • Citizenship classes • Tax Preparation Courses • Table Games • Art Classes • Cooking Classes • Language Classes • Community Meetings • Volunteer Inspection Program</p> <p>Seniors: Field Trips • Board Games • Movies • Art Programs • Cooking Classes • Speaker Series • Book Clubs • Life Skills Classes • LGBTQ events/programs • Caregiver Support Programs • Computer Skill Programs</p> <p>Specialized Programs: Before/After school care for youth with disabilities • Field Trips • Life Skills • Community Service Events • Cooking Classes • Art Programs • Adult Classes and Activities</p>
Partners:	Associated Recreation Council • Sand Point Tennis Center • YMCA • Woodland Park Zoo • Seattle Aquarium • Forterra • Seattle Trails Alliance • Seattle Audubon Society • Friends of Volunteer Park Conservatory • University of Washington Botanic Gardens • The Arboretum Foundation • Washington Trails Association • Tilth Alliance • Museum of History and Industry • Seattle Art Museum • University of Washington • Seattle Park Foundation • Downtown Seattle Association • Freeway Park Association • Friends of the Waterfront • Citizens for Off Leash Areas • Arena Sports • Mountaineers • Center for Wooden Boats • Seattle Public Schools • Other City of Seattle Departments • King County • and many more!

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY AND OUTCOMES

We heard from over 10,000 of you!

WHAT WE ASKED

As we look forward to the next decade, we want to know...

- *How are Seattle parks, centers, and pools serving you, your family, and your neighbors?*
- *What park amenities really excite you?*
- *What park events and community center programs interest you?*
- *Seattle's got a lot on its plate (population growth, construction, rising prices, homelessness, new jobs and opportunities). How can Seattle Parks & Recreation help?*

WHO WE TALKED TO

- Homeowners and renters
- Children, Youth, Adults, Seniors
- Recreation participants and non-participants
- Lifelong Seattle-ites and transplants
- City employees

Of over 1,700 people surveyed, 75% said they preferred natural, forested parks to gardens and manicured lawns.

HOW WE REACHED THEM

- Statistically valid survey of 400+ residents
- Over 50 social media discussions
- 8 online surveys reaching over 1,700 people
- Kiosks in all community centers and pools
- Weekly surveys to City staff
- Email address for comments
- Tabling at over 20 community events citywide
- Over 20 community listening meetings
- 2 large city-wide engagement events
- Surveys and questions asked in over 12 languages at community-led events and translated selected survey questions in the top six languages to reach underrepresented populations.

WHAT WE HEARD

Support Seattle’s growth and density by...

- Preserving open space
- Making multi-use spaces in parks and community centers

Embrace new ways of doing things, like...

- “Thaw the freeze” programs
- Adventure/nature play areas

Prioritize climate resiliency through...

- Creating weather protected spaces in parks
- Support the healthy growth and development of urban forests

Engage more with your community...

- Improve your website, social media, and communication channels
- Better marketing of programs and events

Mitigate the growing wealth gap by...

- Providing low cost recreation opportunities for seniors, adults, youth, and children

Support Seattle’s transportation growth by..

- Thinking strategically about transit connection opportunities and parking constraints parks and community centers

Embrace new trends like...

- Pickleball
- Disc Golf
- Bike Tracks
- Roller Derby

Make parks safer by...

- Removing encampments
- Supporting more police presence
- Cleaning up needles
- Providing more lighting

Provide more access by...

- Ensuring that community center hours work for the public
- Providing year-round bathroom access
- Embracing the spectrum of disability (sensory needs)

Help bring about racial equity through SPR programs, events, and spaces

Keep maintaining and enhancing the existing park and recreation system by...

- Repairing pools and community centers
- Keeping water fountains working
- Adequately staff community centers, pools, and maintenance
- Keeping golf courses open to the public
- Repairing and clean restrooms
- Maintaining trails and paths
- Protecting wildlife

We need more...

- Pickleball
- Pools
- Community center hours
- Green space
- Volleyball courts
- Trails and walking paths
- Movies and concerts
- Outdoor fitness equipment
- Classes and programs
- Art
- Benches
- Playgrounds
- Bathrooms

“I would like to see more diversity in our programs with activities or events that showcase populations in neighborhoods different from our own ... build a bigger, better sense of community. We are growing too fast and have lost a common thread. It could be the parks that bring us together.”

“Replace wading pools with spray parks, they are more accessible to all ages and abilities.”

“Better walking, biking, and transit infrastructure is needed so that all people can better access parks and community centers.”

“I’d love to see a large sport court that can accommodate a Roller Derby track, as well as many other sports!”

“Seattle has great park infrastructure and access for many neighborhoods, so focus should be on equity. Serve those communities that are lacking park access.”

“Let’s embrace the fastest growing sport in the world [pickleball].”

Acknowledgements

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