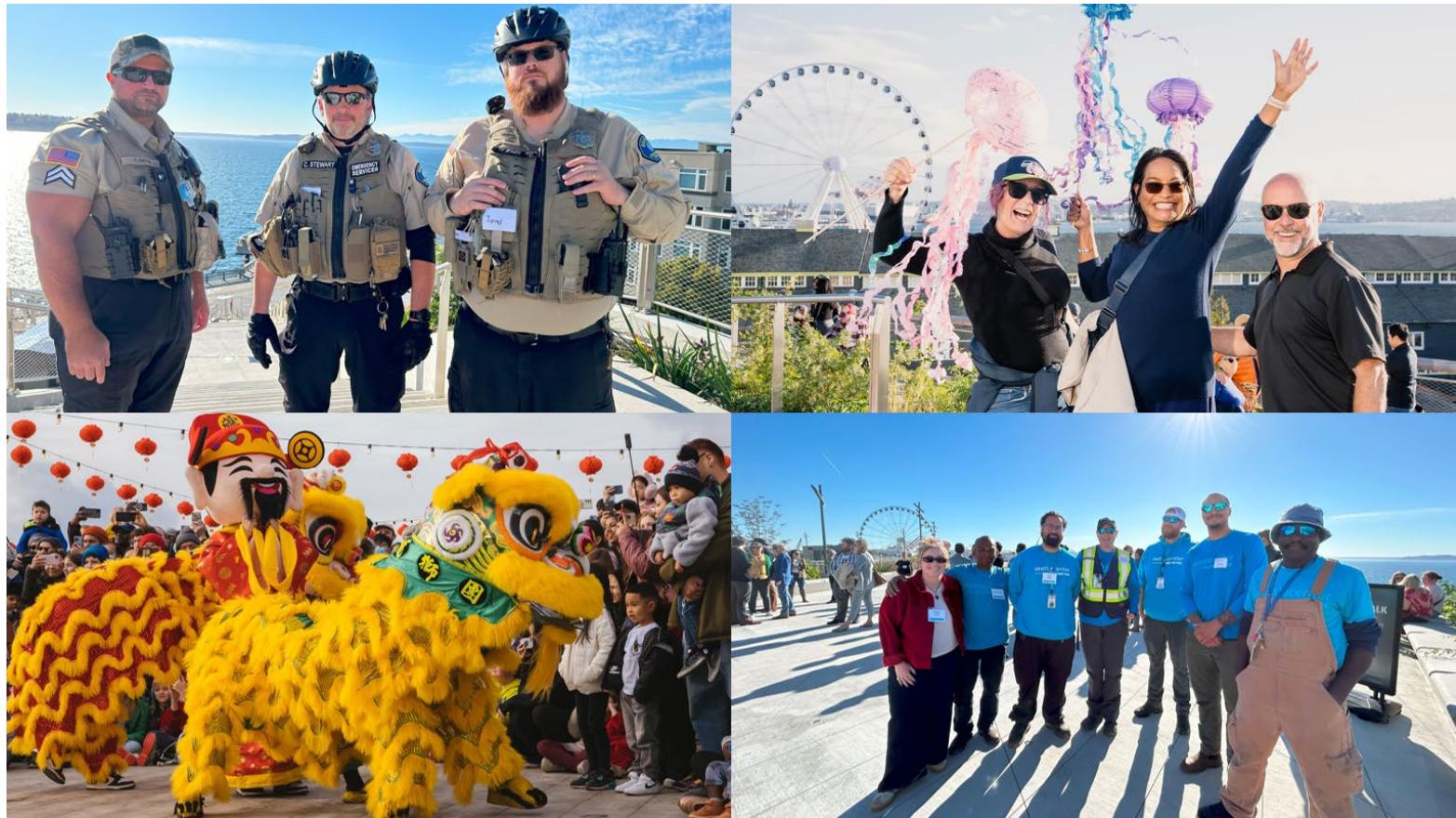


# Central Waterfront Oversight Committee

## Waterfront Park Operations

### 2024 Annual Report



**City of Seattle**

Central Waterfront Oversight Committee



June 2025

# CENTRAL WATERFRONT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

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*The Central Waterfront Oversight Committee (CWOC) was established in 2019 by [City Council Ordinance 125761 \[PDF\]](#) and expanded to include representation on the Committee by Friends of Waterfront Park, The Port of Seattle, and Seattle Center in 2023 through [Ordinance 125761](#). The committee's role is to evaluate and provide feedback to the City and Friends of Waterfront Park (Friends) on the ongoing operation and maintenance of Waterfront Park. In 2021, the committee developed a Waterfront Performance Standard, which it uses as a tool to review the maintenance, public safety, outreach, communications, partnerships, and programming and activation of Waterfront Park. The Committee also advises City leadership on other matters of interest or concern regarding the stewardship of the City's new Waterfront Park and related assets.*

## **Committee Chair**

Gerry Johnson, At-Large

## **Committee Members (2024-2025)**

Donny Stevenson, At-Large (Environmental)

Katie Garrow, At-Large (Labor)

Eric R. Howard, At-Large

Michelle Rusk, Local Improvement District (LID) Residential Tenant

Jim Rowe, Local Improvement District (LID) Commercial Tenant

Craig Schafer, Local Improvement District (LID) Hotel Property Owner

Emily Hoober-George, Local Improvement District (LID) Condominium Owner

Edward M. Leigh, Local Improvement District (LID) Residential Apartment Property Owner

Shawn Jackson, Local Improvement District (LID) property on or within one block of Pike/Pine

Brett Phillips, Local Improvement District (LID) Commercial/Retail Property Owner

Mary Bacarella, Pike Place Market Public Development Authority (Permanent)

Robert W. Davidson, Seattle Aquarium Society (Permanent)

Jon Scholes, Downtown Seattle Association/Metropolitan Improvement District (Permanent)

Bob C. Donegan, Seattle Historic Waterfront Association (Permanent)

Lisa Dixon Howard, Alliance for Pioneer Square (Permanent)

Geri Poor, Port of Seattle (Permanent)

## **Ex-Officio Members**

Marshall Foster, Director, Seattle Center

Angie Brady, Director, Office of the Waterfront and Civic Projects

AP Diaz Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation

Greg Spotts, Director, Seattle Department of Transportation

Seattle Police Department

Joy Shigaki, President/CEO, Friends of Waterfront Park

## **Staff**

Tiffani Melake, Waterfront Operations Manager, Seattle Center

## **Website**

<https://seattlecenter.com/explore/waterfront-park>

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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2024 was an exciting year for us! Construction continued at a steady pace on the promenade and Pier 58; we were able to celebrate the public opening of Overlook Walk in October; and we had an incredible year of more than a million visitors to the park.

As we geared up for 2025 and the park opening in its entirety, we continue to stay highly engaged in park operations and are continually evaluating the City's and Friends performance in relation to programming/activation, maintenance, and public safety.

In 2024, we set the following work goals for the CWOC.

- **Fully implement the Waterfront Park Performance Standard for evaluation purposes**
- **Recruit, appoint, and process reappointments for the Central Waterfront Oversight Committee**

## **Implementation of the Waterfront Park Performance Standard**

Throughout 2024, the committee participated in three quarterly park inspections as required under the Waterfront Park Performance Standard. The inspections involved hours of commitment from committee members while they personally walked the park to determine if maintenance of the completed portions of the park were up to the rigorous performance standards developed in 2021.

As a result, we were able to provide feedback and insight to the relevant city departments and Friends throughout the year – which resulted in some changes to park operations and allowed for more successful inspections as the year progressed.

One noteworthy change spotlighted by the Committee was adding garbage and recycling receptacles on the East side of the park, which has not had receptacles, and was not scoped for any. This recommendation and improvement positively impacted and changed the park experience on the East Side and helped the maintenance team meet the East Side park inspection standard.

Both Pier 62 and Habitat Beach had positive inspections throughout the year, with problem areas either identified with solutions or identified as outside of the Seattle Center's ability to provide maintenance services. (such as natural cracking on P62).

Additionally, the CWOC has been deeply engaged in the continued efforts around park planning for operation of the full park, keeping an eye on construction progress and participating on the steering committee for the Grand Opening event later in 2025.

Overall, the Committee confirms that the decision of the Mayor and City Council to migrate primary responsibility for park maintenance to the Seattle Center was both foresighted and effective.

## **Recruit, appoint, and process appointments for the Central Waterfront Oversight Committee**

Our vacant positions in 2024 included:

- (1) At Large Community Representative (City Council appointed)
- (1) LID Residential Apartment Tenant (Mayor appointed)
- (1) LID Owner of an Office Property (City Council appointed)
- (1) LID Owner of a Commercial/Retail Property (City Council appointed)

By the end of 2024, we had reappointed all current members of the committee and ran a competitive recruitment process that included the Mayor's Office and City Council for the vacant positions, filling three out of the four positions. We currently still have the LID Owner of a Commercial/Retail Property position vacant and will continue to recruit in 2025.

Also, Our committee had one key recommendation in our 2023 Annual Report for the Mayor and City Council consideration, listed below.

- **A recommendation for SDOT funding to be allocated to Seattle Center Waterfront Operations to take care of the SDOT landscaping within the Waterfront Seattle improvements.**

Unfortunately, landscaping elements of the overall park are within SDOT rights-of-way and therefore outside the scope of the dedicated Seattle Center's team. While funding for the maintenance of the SDOT right-of-way elements is supposedly available from residual construction funds for another year, we are seeing the SDOT landscaping failing and not within conditions consistent with the Committee's standards for the entire park. This is particularly unfortunate given that the original plantings affected are now in their so-called "establishment phase" and the failure to properly care for them will inevitably result in their loss, not to mention be easily discernable from the thriving vegetation already under Seattle Center care. The solution to this problem is to also migrate responsibility for stewardship of the SDOT right-of-way elements to Seattle Center. However, as we've learned and validated through the process of transferring responsibility for park maintenance to the Seattle Center, any shift in responsibility MUST be accompanied by identification and commitment of the resources needed to sustain the work.

Fortunately, both the Mayor's office and the City Council have expressed policy-level support for the concept of formally assigning responsibility for maintenance of the SDOT right-of-way portions of the park to Seattle Center, as well or identifying the requisite resources to support that work on a reasonably enduring basis.

This effort was flagged in a Council proviso in the SDOT Transportation Levy legislation that also attempted to allocate funding as outlined below through the year-to-year life cycle of the levy to fund Seattle Center maintenance of the Waterfront SDOT right-of-way elements. Once funding is confirmed and the needed positions authorized, Seattle Center will move forward with the next steps on hiring gardeners to care for the SDOT portions of Waterfront Park landscaping.

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Total	\$606,066	\$644,066	\$718,933	\$718,933	\$754,880	\$792,624	\$832,255	\$873,868

However, the City has yet to confirm and implement the clear legislative intent of the proviso by completing assignment of this responsibility along with the requisite funding from the SDOT levy to support it to the Seattle Center.

Meanwhile, the Committee will continue its oversight function as well as advocating for a long-term solution that consolidates maintenance responsibilities for the entire park in Seattle Center as well as for formal commitment of the resources that will be needed to support it going forward.

# CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES...

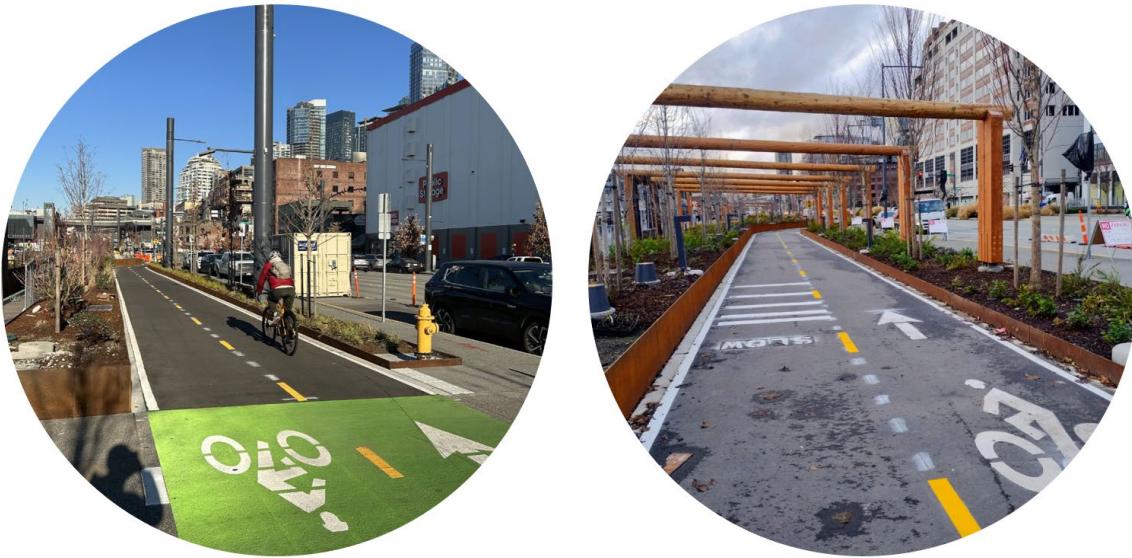
A moment of celebration for Seattleites! Overlook Walk Opened October 2024!



We are in the final countdown! 2025 is the last year for [Waterfront Seattle](#) construction. The next milestones to look forward to are: the full opening of the cycle track; the opening of the public restroom at Pier 58; followed later in the year by the full grand opening of Waterfront Park, which includes Pier 58.

### Cycle Track

King to Union of the Cycle track opening in January 2025. Before the end of Q1, the cycle track should be open in its entirety to the public.

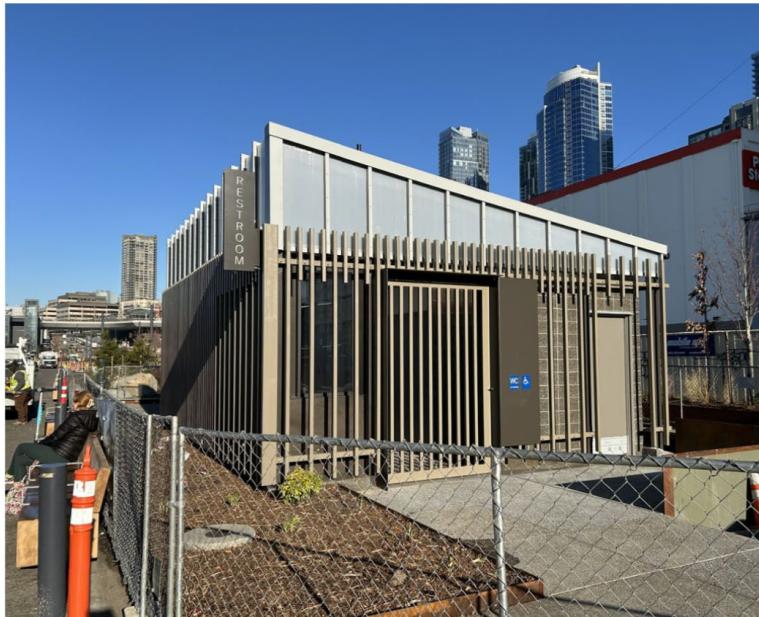


### Waterfront's new public restroom

Opening in early 2025, the restroom will have a unique operations model between Seattle Center and Friends to maintain a high-quality experience for park users.

The Seattle Center maintenance team will provide daily cleaning and respond to any immediate situations that may arise.

A concierge at the restroom, fresh flowers, and music will be provided through Friends during open hours.



### Waterfront Permanent Art Installations

Office of the Waterfront and Civic Projects (OWCP) hosted an opening event for the dedications of artworks by Randi Purser, Tyson Simmons and Keith Stevenson, and Oscar Tuazon. The artists and representatives of the Suquamish Tribe and Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, as well as city leaders, spoke to the importance of Indigenous history and culture on the waterfront.



There are three more important permanent art being installed in 2025 by OWCP.



*In progress, from left to right*

*Overlook Walk, Ann Hamilton, spring 2025 tbd*

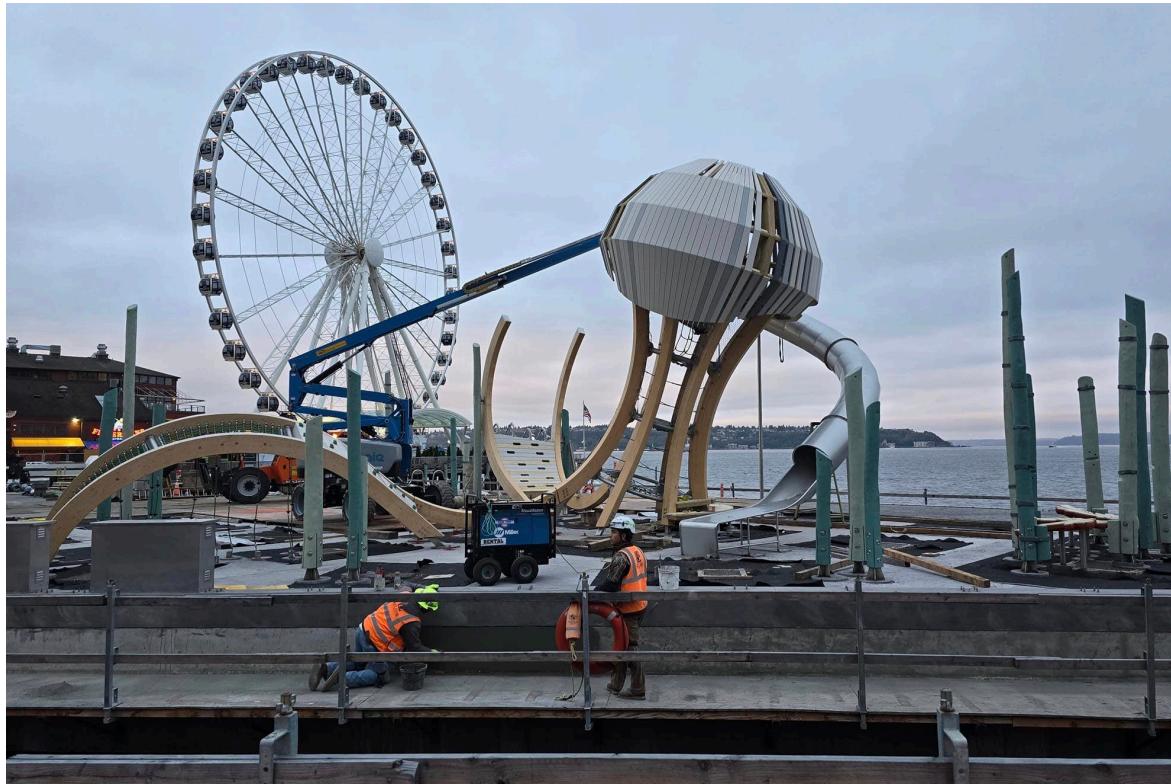
*Salish Steps, MTK Matriarchs, spring 2025*

*Welcome Figures, Shaun Peterson, spring 2025*

### **The FINALE – Pier 58 and the park promenade**

Excitement continues to build as we watch the playground being installed at Pier 58. As the last large public space portion of the project, Pier 58 will have a grove for lounging, big open space for programming, the George Tsutakawa Water Fountain, grass turf for relaxing, and the Jellyfish Playground.

The park promenade continues to see the installation of benches, landscaping, lighting, and park features, all to be completed and handed over to Seattle Center in 2025 for park operations.



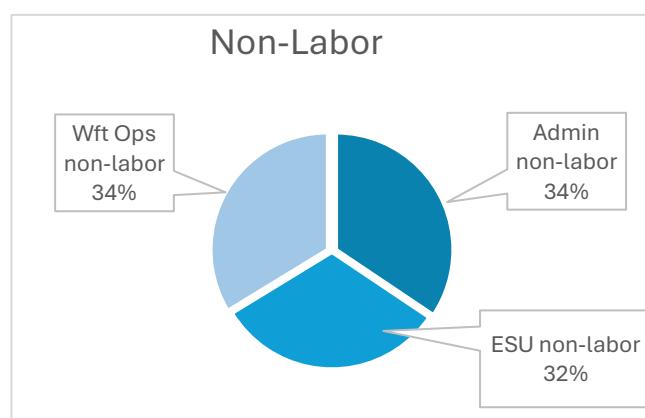
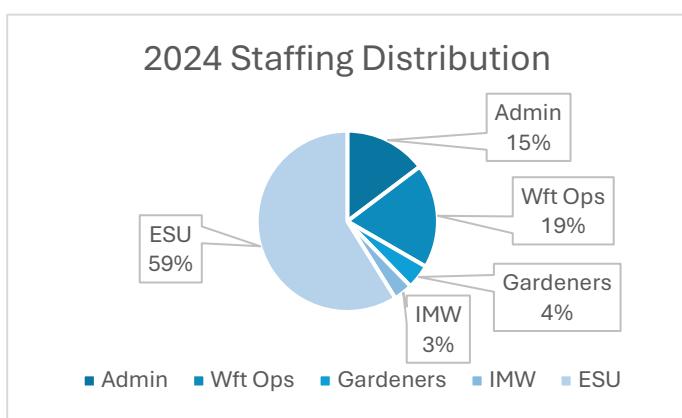
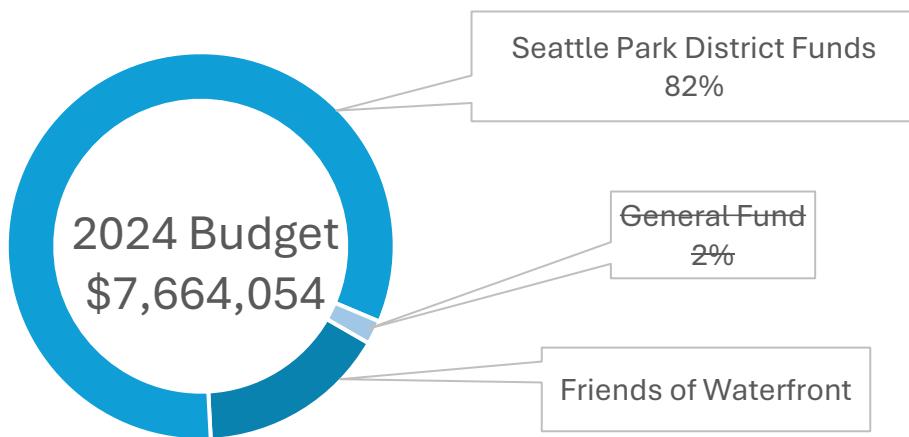
# BUDGET

## Seattle Center Park Operations (Maintenance, Landscaping, Public Safety)

2024 Adopted Budget	MPD	MPD Public Safety	General Fund	Friends	Total
	\$5,853,240	\$865,814	\$100,000	\$945,000	\$7,664,054

### 2024 Budget Notes:

- \$100K General Fund reduction
- Reallocation - \$467K to Seattle Center for City Central Costs
- Seattle Park District (MPD) amount includes \$1.7M in carryforward from 2023



2024 Actual Budget	YTD Expenses	Available Balance	Percent used	Carry forward to 2025
\$7,764,054	\$4,806,858	\$2,957,196	61%	\$2,957,196

Seattle Center had significant cost savings in 2024 from vacant positions that needed hiring waivers prior to running hiring processes. This included our administrative staff analyst, one lead worker, one installation maintenance worker, three laborers, and six public safety officers. Cost savings show a positive carry forward amount for 2025 and are critical for closing the gap on Waterfront's future anticipated budget shortfall.

Several factors impacted the Waterfront Operations budget in 2024, including AWI and salary adjustments made to align with industry standards. The MPD funding did not anticipate for such a high increase in rates, and overall shows a shortfall in funds available to pay for these differences over the 6-year MPD funding cycle the Waterfront receives funding from.

Funding from Seattle Park District (MPD) grows at 4% with the anticipated AWI at 5.5%. This delta will continue to create a cost gap annually, ultimately running out of carry forward funding in 2026 and having a budget shortfall for the two remainder years of the MPD cycle (years 2027 and 2028).

By 2028 the cost of operating the park at the capacity that is required to take care of the entire park and meet Performance Standards is around and estimated \$9.2M. Friends has contributed \$1M annually during this first funding cycle to go towards public safety, but those funds cannot be guaranteed in a future funding cycles.

Income	2025	2026	2027	2028
<b>Seattle Park District (MPD)</b>	\$ 5,717,833	\$ 5,946,547	\$ 6,184,409	\$ 6,431,785
<b>Friends</b>	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,000,000
<b>Carryforward</b>	\$ 2,957,196	\$ 1,650,030.54	\$ 170,579.16	\$ -
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 10,039,068</b>	<b>\$ 8,960,617</b>	<b>\$ 7,719,027</b>	<b>\$ 6,303,764</b>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$8,024,998.46</b>	<b>\$8,425,998.38</b>	<b>\$8,847,048.30</b>	<b>\$9,289,150.72</b>
<b>Delta</b>			<b>(\$1,492,060)</b>	<b>(\$3,349,426)</b>

#### Friends of Waterfront Park

Friends of Waterfront Park's **\$170 million campaign** allocates **\$110 million** to Seattle for construction and **\$60 million** for activation and maintenance. Friends has successfully raised 95% of its philanthropic commitments to the City! In 2025, it is gearing up towards the close out of its capital campaign and will switch to focus on annual fundraising to support programming/activation, and public safety in the park.

In 2024, Friends received a \$700k grant from Metro to fund the Seattle Historic Waterfront Association's shuttle services that were provided from Memorial day to Labor day.

A snapshot of 2024's overall budget:

Revenue	Actual YTD	Budget YTD	Annual Budget
<b>Contributions</b>	\$15,350,019.19	\$30,091,000.00	\$30,091,000.00
<b>Grants</b>	\$479,613.23		\$0.00
<b>City Contracts</b>	\$250,000.00	\$250,000.00	\$250,000.00
<b>Earned Revenue</b>	\$100,200.00	\$220,000.00	\$210,000.00
<b>Interest/Investment Income</b>	\$1,315,263.65	\$750,000.00	\$750,000.00
<b>Other Income</b>	\$38,816.28	\$10,860.00	\$10,860.00
<b>Total Revenue</b>	\$17,533,912.35	\$31,321,860.00	\$31,311,860.00

Expenditures	Actual YTD	Budget YTD	Annual Budget
<b>Marketing &amp; Communications</b>	\$310,297.32	\$532,150.00	\$532,150.00
<b>Community Impact &amp; Programs</b>	\$450,475.01	\$653,500.00	\$653,500.00
<b>Park Experience</b>	\$454,148.39	\$373,311.00	\$373,311.00
<b>Seattle Center (Public Safety)</b>	\$945,000.00	\$945,000.00	\$945,000.00
<b>Other Expenditures</b>	\$5,978,870.78	\$6,182,284.37	\$6,182,284.36
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	\$8,138,791.50	\$8,686,245.37	\$8,686,245.36

Shuttle Service	Actual YTD	Budget YTD	Annual Budget
<b>Shuttle Service Grants</b>	\$758,205.00	\$700,000.00	\$700,000.00
<b>Shuttle Program Expenses</b>	\$746,441.57	\$665,000.00	\$665,000.00
<b>Difference</b>	\$11,763.43	\$35,000.00	\$35,000.00

## SEATTLE CENTER AT WATERFRONT PARK

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In 2024, Seattle Center completed the majority of its hiring for the dedicated Waterfront Operations team. This team oversees operations, landscaping and maintenance of Waterfront Park. As the park fully opens in 2025, two additional gardeners will be added to the team.

The Waterfront Ops team is easily identifiable while in the park and divided into three different maintenance zones. Tasks are identified as basic opening the park daily tasks, work orders, and projects. The team works together within their zones to deliver a highly maintained park.

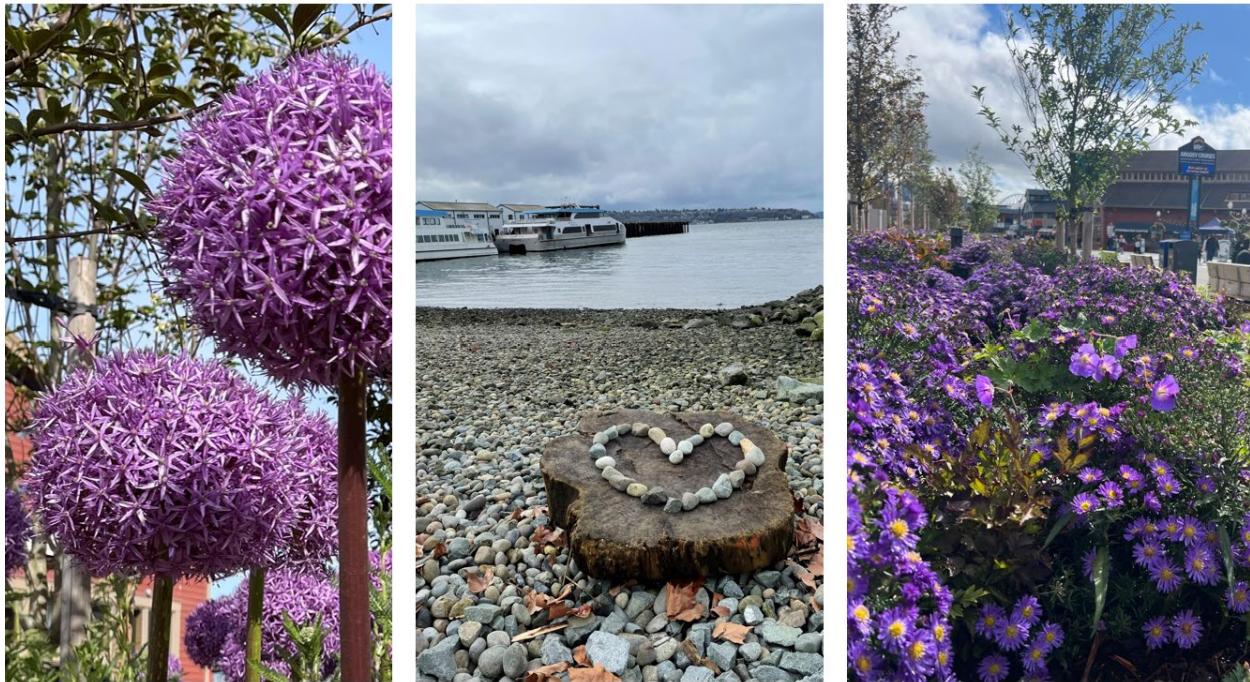
The biggest area of struggle in 2024 was on the East Sidewalks around the Compass Center. The team spends a disproportionately large portion of its time on this block while trying to build constructive relationships with the frequent visitors of the compass center. They pressure wash the area weekly, however, often this portion of the park is an uphill battle to keep clean.

### Graffiti removal

The Waterfront team participated in Seattle's One Graffiti Team program and has transitioned work orders for graffiti into the city's workers app.

Our dedicated team was able to remove approximately 1,150 tags of graffiti in 2024 throughout Waterfront Park. One large factor in our success is having the team that is dedicated specifically to the park and can handle most graffiti tags within the same day, or less than 48 hours.

#### Landscaping Maintenance



The landscaping team was small but mighty in 2024. They provide daily maintenance, watering, weeding, and mulching as needed. Each season brings a new wave of fresh plant life to the Waterfront! Watching it continually change, and grow is as much fun for our team as it is for the public!

We had several small projects that we were able to enhance the landscaping in smaller sections of the park such as Railroad Way, East Sidewalks and Pier 62 with circular and trough planters.

As portions of the landscaping are handed from the contractor to Seattle Center, we will continue to right size our team to take care of the park.

As noted, the condition and survivability of the plantings within the SDOT rights-of-way, currently outside the scope of Seattle Center's responsibilities, remains a material concern.

## FRIENDS OF WATERFRONT PARK ACTIVATION:

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In 2024, Waterfront Park welcomed 1.1 million visitors, a 35% increase from 2023. Friends facilitated 67 programs/activations in Waterfront Park, which included Pier 62, Overlook Walk and the park promenade across the following categories;

- 12 arts and culture programs;
- 10 Movement and wellness classes/workshops;
- 2 Civic Engagement events

Attendance totaled 30,743 across the 24 programs/activations.

According to observational surveys completed throughout the year, park goers also engaged in a variety of activities outside of programs and events. These activities included eating, drinking, reading, dog walking, jogging, and enjoying the view among others. Of the observed activities, the fourth most common way visitors engaged with the park was entering on of the Promenade Pop-up Kiosks. Friends of Waterfront Park reported that 5,364 park goers visited the Promenade Pop-ups over roughly two months.



Figure 1 & 2 Promenade Pop-Ups

#### Park Usage Demographics

Observed Gender Identity	Number Observed	% of Total	Census Estimate	Difference
Female	244	34.6%	48%	-13.4%
Male	218	30.8%	52%	-21.2%
Unknown	244	34.6%	N/A	N/A

Estimated Age	Number Observed	% of Total	Census Estimate	Difference
Under 18	115	23.14%	14%	+9.14%
18-64 years	302	60.76%	73%	-12.24%
65 years and over	80	16.1%	13%	+3.1%

Race/Ethnicities	Number Observed	% of Total	Census Estimate	Difference
Asian	96	21.3%	17%	+4%
Middle Eastern	12	2.7%	N/A	N/A
White	236	52.3%	59%	-6.7%
Black	51	11.5%	6%	+5.5%
Latine	48	10.6%	9%	+0.04%
Native	4	0.9%	0%*	+0.9%
Other	4	0.9%	9%	+0.09%

# PUBLIC SAFETY

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In partnership, the City and Friends provide resources to help provide a safe and welcoming park visitor experience for all.

The Waterfront's public safety model has 4-tiers.

**Tier 1:** Friends contracts with a third-party social service provider, ETS REACH, to make contact and offer resources to those experiencing crisis, distress, homelessness, or other needs.

**Tier 2:** Friends employs park ambassadors to provide customer service and interact with park visitors.

**Tier 3:** Seattle Center provides the Emergency Services Unit (ESU) in the park, who provides positive interactions and contact, and has the ability to enforce park rules.

**Tier 4:** Seattle Police Department (SPD) to respond to life threatening or criminal situations.

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## **Tier 1 – FRIENDS PARTNERSHIP WITH ETS/REACH**



Friends' partnership with ETS REACH, provides essential social services to those in need within Waterfront Park boundaries.

Engagement History with REACH	People Served
<b>ALL</b>	85
<b>New to REACH in 2024</b>	15
<b>Previously engaged with REACH</b>	70

<b>All Substantive Encounters</b>	<b>813</b>
<b>Face to Face</b>	772
<b>Phone call or Video chat</b>	24

Outcomes (Service goals)	Outcome Count
<b>ALL</b>	611
<b>Family, Community &amp; Culture</b>	75
<b>Finances &amp; Benefits</b>	19
<b>Foundational</b>	50
<b>Housing</b>	49
<b>Legal</b>	1
<b>Mental Health</b>	42
<b>Physical Health</b>	262
<b>Substance Use</b>	108
<b>Other</b>	5

#### **TIER 2 – FRIENDS PARK AMBASSADOR INFO HERE**



Park Ambassadors are easily identifiable Friends staff in the park. They are responsible for the programs/activations and events in the park.

This team positively interacts with the public daily and is able to inform park users of park rules, reaching out to Seattle Center's ESU team when needed, for assistance.



### **Tier 3 – Seattle Center Emergency Services Unit (ESU)**

Seattle Center provided 15 ESU officers in 2024 that spanned a 24/7 operation. Officers patrolled the waterfront by foot, bike, segway, and vehicle across three different shifts (day, evening, overnight).

We saw an incredible positive outcome from having a physical and visual presence in the park. ESU had over 26,000 recorded interactions with the public, with only 7% of those interactions resulting from violating a park rule. We have seen that the public feels comfortable interacting and engaging with officers for things as simple as directions, to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable with a situation in the park.

We will be scaling up the ESU team in 2025 as the park fully opens and will separate the team into three zones spanning the 20 acres park. Our team worked closely with key partners and stakeholders on the waterfront and in the park and continue to foster those relationships.

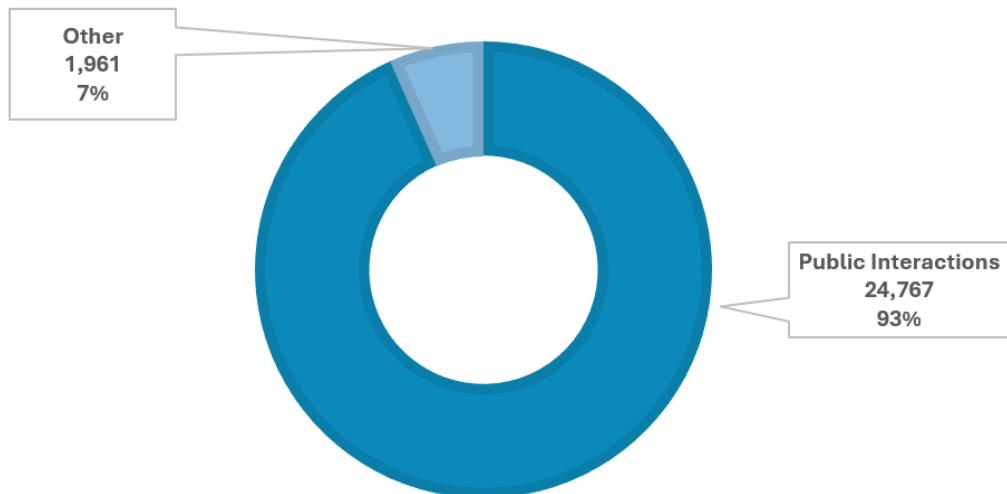
It's noteworthy that since ESU's presence showed up on the waterfront in July 2023, there have been 241 reported camping attempts by ESU, with 0 encampments established.



Outlined below are the areas that ESU responded to most frequently.

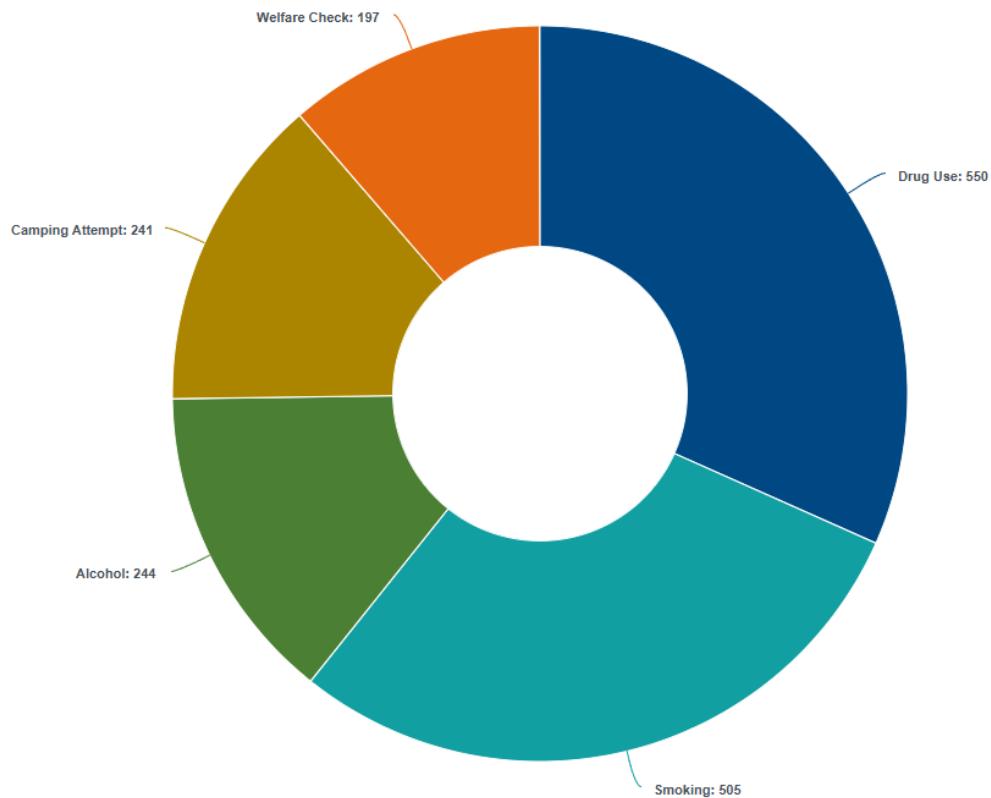


## ESU INTERACTIONS JANUARY - DECEMBER 2024



## ESU Top 5 Issues

Period: 01/01/2024 to 12/31/2024



# RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

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## ***Recommendation:***

Overall responsibility for Maintenance of the Waterfront assets located within the SDOT rights-of-way should formally migrate from SDOT to Seattle Center. Adequate funding to support that additional work for the Seattle Center should be effectively and legislatively allocated from within the voter-approved Transportation Levy, as intended by City Council.

## ***Recommendation:***

Although funding for the park and park boulevard portions of the park has been identified from a collection of sources including an allocation with the current Parks Levy, we do project a funding gap for this work in the 2027-28 biennial budget. Concurrently, the City will be working on the renewal of the Parks Levy to be submitted to the voters within a similar timeframe. The Parks levy renewal proposition would presumably be the vehicle for addressing ongoing funding for Seattle Center's Waterfront Park responsibilities. Current MPD funds will need to be increased to account for the difference between levels of services and funding capacity, which includes the cost-of-living increases, wage alignment and overhead costs paid to central services.

## ***Next Steps: Recruitment***

We have one vacant position open on the committee, which is the LID Owner of a Commercial/Retail Property. We will continue recruiting to fill this position.

## ***Next Steps: Celebrate the season of Grand Opening of the Waterfront!***

The long-anticipated opening of Waterfront Park in its entirety is before us, this year. We have been actively participating on the Waterfront Grand Opening Steering Committee and are looking forward to celebrating the completion and opening of this reimagined public space along with our fellow Seattleites and the greater region.

We will continue to evaluate the park on an ongoing basis using the Waterfront Park Performance Standard and look forward to continuing our work and partnership with the Seattle Center and Friends of Waterfront Park.