

SEATTLE PARKS FOUNDATION

FALL NEWSLETTER | 2021

Mural Installation by Youth at Be'er Sheva Park in partnership with Art of Resistance and Resilience, Office of Arts and Culture, RBAC, L2L and Department of Neighborhoods, Photographer: Britt Le

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As I write this, we are still developing our three-year strategy (more to come on this in the future). But we know we will be applying several early insights to that work:

- **The fiscal sponsorship we provide is a valuable service that elevates community voices and supports projects in meaningful and consequential ways.**
- **Our partnership work in the Duwamish Valley, Rainier Valley, and Lake City (among other neighborhoods) is critical to addressing inequity in green space access and climate justice.**
- **Representation of Indigenous people and people of color, as well as linguistic representation, matters—among our staff, leadership, board, and community partners.**
- **Transparency and communication are critical to our success, and we have much work to do in these areas.**
- **Climate change resilience and climate justice must be priorities in our work.**
- **We must continue to invest in the capacity of our team and our community partners.**

In the coming months, you'll see more communications from us about our strategy; we welcome your feedback as we work to ensure that we are amplifying community voices.

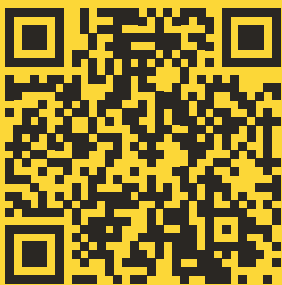
Over the summer, I shared that we were doubling our advocacy efforts for parks as essential spaces in our community. We aim to elevate the importance of

parks to our elected officials and highlight the need for funding and resources for park and green space infrastructure. This month, we will host a Mayoral forum and a Port Commissioner Forum in partnership with the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition, with a focus on the cross-section of climate and environmental justice. We hope you can join us. For those who cannot tune in live, we will make these events available to watch online.

This coming year is crucial for parks. With new incoming city leaders and the renewal of the Metropolitan Park District Levy, we have an opportunity to reverse the trend of defunding parks that we've seen over the past two years. As you fill out your ballot this November, please look for candidates who consider parks critical to our city infrastructure and who are willing to ensure that they are funded.

The fall season is a moment to celebrate and thank our community for your dedication to parks throughout the city. On November 9, we will host a virtual celebration that highlights some of the great work our community partners have done over the past year. Get a free ticket at seattleparksfoundation.org/events. On page four, you'll see all of the active projects and programs of our community partners in the past year. At our celebration event, you can get to know these projects in greater detail. We will also be highlighting new projects that we hope to see come to life in 2022, such as the Garfield Super Block, which you can read more about on page seven in this newsletter.

Finally, none of this work would be possible without the generosity and leadership of our community members. Your contributions of time, talent, and treasure help us keep the green in our Emerald City.



**From the staff at Seattle Parks Foundation,
thank you to all our donors, partners, volunteers,
and supporters over this past year!**

Visit our donor list at

<https://www.seattleparksfoundation.org/donor-list/>

or scan the code to the left to see the complete list.

Park Project Highlights

CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION AND/OR OPENED THIS YEAR:

- The AMP: AIDS Memorial Pathway
- Cheasty Trails and Bike Park
- Duwamish Waterway Park
- East Howe Steps Plaza
- Occidental Square Pavilion and play area
- River City SkatePark
- Seward Park Torii
- West Montlake Park Colonnade
- Volunteer Park Amphitheater

ACTIVE PROJECTS UNDERWAY IN 2022-2023

- Arboretum Creek
- Be'er Sheva Park
- Detective Cookie Chess Park
- Eli's Park - Burke Gilman Play Area
- Garfield Super Block
- Gateway Park North
- Georgetown- South Park Trail
- Little Brook Park
- Magnuson Children's Garden
- Rainier Beach Urban Farm
- Roxhill Park
- Troll's Knoll Park

PROGRAMS UNDERWAY 2021-2022

- Community-Centric Fundraising
- Community Land Conservancy
- Duwamish Infrastructure Restoration Training (DIRT) Corps
- Duwamish Tree Canopy Project (South Park and Georgetown)
- Duwamish Valley Sustainability Association
- King County Equity Coalition
- Leafline Trails Coalition
- Outdoor Asian
- Youth Internships in Duwamish Valley (located at Duwamish Valley Youth Corps, Cultivate South Park, Duwamish Valley Sustainability Association and Friends of Georgetown History)



River City SkatePark:

Realizing a Vision in South Park

Just off South Cloverdale Street in South Park, tucked into a corner next to an onramp to SR 99, is a mysterious structure. From the street, it looks at first glance like a prehistoric monument—or maybe an Earthship. Get closer and you'll see that it's a skatepark structure, with concrete curves and swells lovingly adorned with graffiti. But this is no ordinary skatepark structure. Known as Stargate, with portals in the four cardinal directions, it was designed to evoke flow and transcendence, the completely-in-the-moment state that skaters experience. A kind of homage to the Zen of skateboarding, it sits at the heart of the 4,000-square-foot River City SkatePark.

"It's all based on sacred geometry," says Kim Schwarzkopf, co-leader of the River City SkatePark project. "It sounds a little out there, but it's very meaningful because it's the vision of Mark 'Monk' Hubbard."

Hubbard, a legendary skater and founder of Seattle-based skatepark design firm Grindline, died in 2018, but his beloved presence is still felt in the skating community, and Schwarzkopf still speaks of him in the present tense. "He's built skateparks all over the world, but this is where he could realize his vision as a skateboarder and as a skatepark designer/artist, and as a local," she says. "When pro skaters come to Seattle, Stargate is at the top of their list."

A Community Effort

Fifteen years ago, when a group of South Park teenagers were seeking a safe, legal place to skate, caring neighbors put the word out and Hubbard volunteered to design the park and ensure it was built. Schwarzkopf, who was becoming involved in skatepark advocacy throughout the city, heard about the teens' project through mutual friends and immediately fell in love with the idea.



The nonprofit Sea Mar Community Health Centers offered a site for the skatepark—an overgrown piece of land that was often used for illegal dumping.

When Schwarzkopf got involved, she says, "I thought it would just be about collecting signatures and passing out some stickers."

From the outset, the skatepark has been maintained by a group of volunteers, the Friends of River City SkatePark, who do everything from pick up trash to whack weeds. "We've been working on this park for 15 years," says Schwarzkopf. "But it's been in the last three or four years that we've had renewed energy and an increased push to make it a more welcoming and inclusive park for South Park neighbors and kids and families." With contributions from skaters, parents, neighbors, local businesses and the hard work of Jake Hellenkamp from Seattle Neighborhood Group, the effort has taken on new life. That renewed energy has led to the construction of a flat, open skate plaza for younger and novice skaters, an art wall, and a rain garden built by members of Duwamish Infrastructure Restoration Training (DIRT) Corps. Improvements also include better sightlines



Young skaters at River City SkatePark

from the street into the park. These upgrades were celebrated in August with an end-of-summer launch party to activate the space. A local band, The Fakies, played in the middle of Stargate, and organized activities included skating trick competitions and timed trials with categories for kids, women, and trans people—even a masters’ division for so-called “old-timers” (that is, skaters over 30).

Friends of River City SkatePark are pushing forward with additional improvement plans, writing grants and networking with city departments and community organizations. The plans include extending the skate plaza, improving lighting in the

park, building a roof canopy for all-weather skating, and replacing the chain-link fence around the park, which is in a state of disrepair, with a sturdier architectural fence that will help define the space and purpose of the park.

Like young skaters, the park needs some nurturing to realize its full potential. It also needs to be safe and accessible to better serve its urban community. The vision is for a place that both embodies creative skater culture and welcomes all ages and abilities. That would be, Schwarzkopf says, “really in the original spirit of what Monk and the rest of us want to do with this place.”

Ways to Get Involved:

River City SkatePark is fiscally sponsored by Seattle Parks Foundation. The project is seeking funding to hire a project manager and support the next phase of the park construction.

You can contribute at **Seattle Parks Foundation — River City SkatePark** and send any inquiries about the project to **info@seattleparksfoundation.org**.



Garfield Super Block Team

The Garfield Super Block:

Celebrating the Central District's Historic Communities with Art and Storytelling

When Robert Stephens returned home from the Vietnam War at just 21 years old, his elders were ready with his next assignment.

“My elders, they didn’t ask me—they told me, you’re going to be on that board and that committee.”

Sitting on a park bench outside the Garfield Community Center, he smiles. **“Some 51 years later, I’m still doing this thing that my elders told me I had to do.”**

Over the years, Stephens has been a tireless advocate for community projects, sitting on committees and assuming various leadership roles. And he has become a clarion voice for equitable development. His latest project is the Garfield Super Block, a renovation project promised by the city more than 15 years ago.

Genesis of the Super Block Project

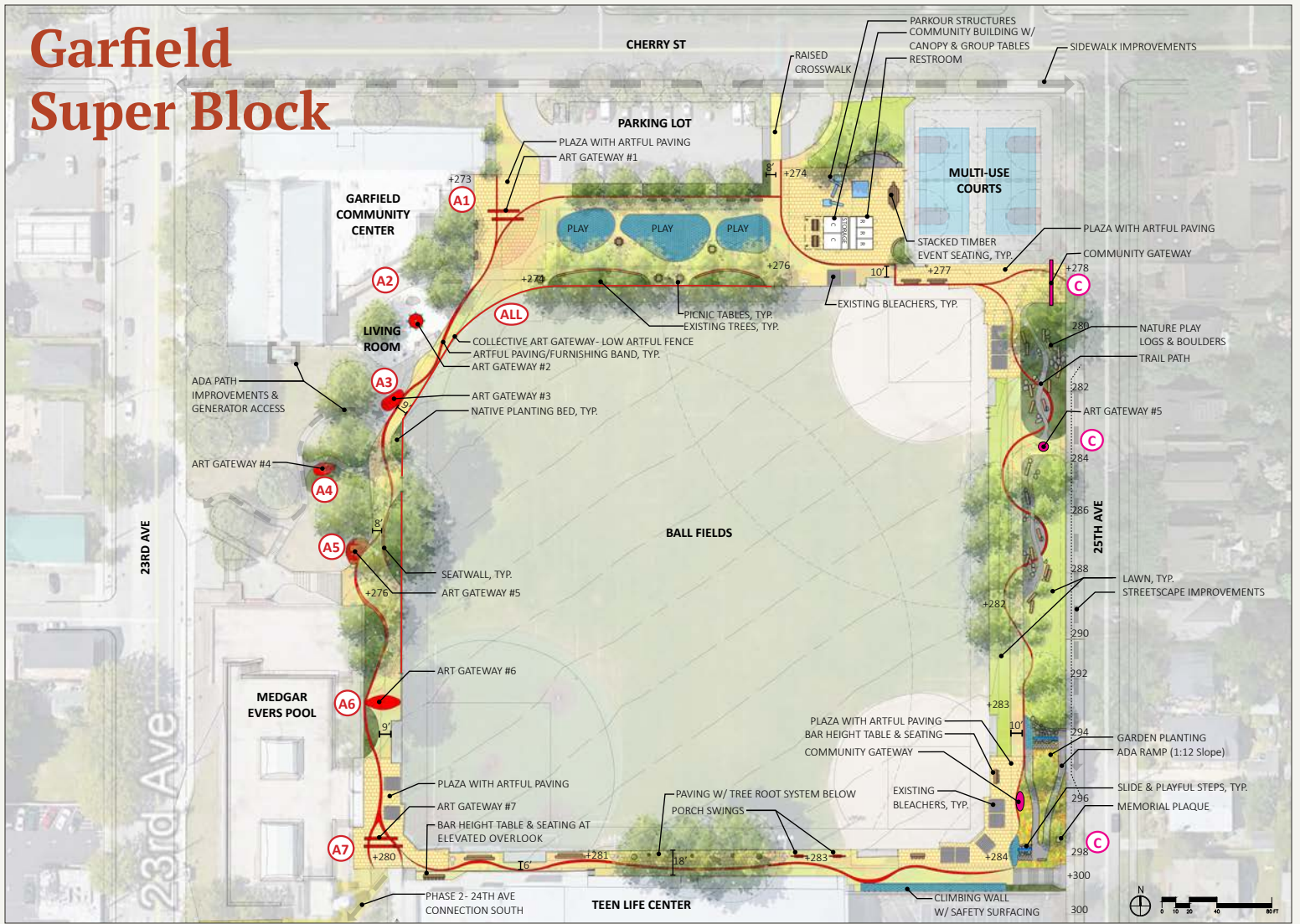
In 2003, Seattle Public Schools had plans to renovate Garfield High School and build the new Quincy Jones

Performing Arts Center. But during the planning process, they found that there wasn’t enough land for the requisite number of parking stalls. Seeking a path forward, they approached the community to seek a variance—a way to override the parking limitation and continue construction.

In response, Stephens took the existing Neighborhood Plan, which was built on Central District community input, and put together what came to be known as the Garfield Super Block Master Plan. As a condition of approving the variance, the plan called for major improvements and amenities—including improved park facilities and a Legacy and Promise Promenade.

The plan was approved by the ordinance variation committee, which included representatives from the community, the parks department, and Seattle Public Schools. But after completion of the school renovation and the performing arts center, the Super Block Plan was abandoned.

Garfield Super Block



Stephens never forgot, however; he continued to advocate for a healthy and vibrant built environment in the heart of the Central District. In 2019, 14 years after the Super Block Plan was approved, the project gained new traction when it received a grant from the city’s Office of Economic Development. Shortly afterward, architects Stephanie Ingram and Sharon Khosla and other volunteers joined Stephens on his crusade to see the project come to fruition.

The team, which has since grown to nine members, decided to use the grant money to hire a landscape architect to update and expand the scope of the proposed renovation. They have a simple goal: to hold the city accountable for completing the Garfield Super Block Project.

Legacy and Promise

When asked what part of the project they’re most excited to see come to life, the answer from team

members is resounding and unanimous: the Legacy and Promise Promenade.

The planned promenade is a trail loop that will be adorned with eight commissioned art pieces from local artists and will connect the Horace Mann building, which houses Nova High School, with the Quincy Jones Performing Arts Center. It will anchor and celebrate the historic communities of the Central District: Duwamish, Jewish, African American, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Italian.

The team is working to put together a paid advisory committee that will oversee the art plan and the vision for the promenade, with one or two representatives from each community.

“We want it done right,” says Khosla. **“And we want it done thoughtfully.”**

All the commissioned artists will work together to create a piece for the entrance to the park, which will

symbolize the collaboration and friendship among the communities and the bonds they have created through culture, arts, and food.

As changes ripple through the Central District, the theme of “legacy and promise” underlines the importance of historical memory during a period of rapid gentrification.

“We don’t really have the money and the power to stop them from tearing down everything,” Stephens says. **“But we do have the power to keep footprints in the community... I believe art is the history of one’s culture.”**

“There’s a lot of new people moving to this neighborhood,” Ingram adds. **“People should know how important this space is and how important it is to defend the community space here.”**

Community Values and Voices

All nine members of the team live in or near the Central District and have strong ties to the community. They have unfailingly met every Tuesday since 2019 to discuss strategic planning and apply for grants. This past summer, they held virtual events and meetings, sometimes with more than 200 participants, to ensure that they were accurately reflecting the community’s values and voices.

Thanks to these efforts, city council members Kshama Sawant and Dan Strauss added \$500,000 in funding for the project to the city’s supplemental budget. The comment form garnered 700 signatures in five days, which speaks to the strong community support. The earmarked funding will go toward design and

engineering, putting the project on a path to being “shovel ready” in 2022.

As with many communities of color, the Central District was subject to the racist practice of redlining, which led to residents of color being denied mortgages because the neighborhood was deemed as “risky” for investments. This led to a generational wealth gap that still exists today. The consequences, compounded by public underfunding and neglect, can be seen in the lack of access to green spaces in the Central District.

Green spaces provide many physical and mental health benefits, bring down crime, and combat the urban “heat island” effect in the summer months, which disproportionately affects communities of color. Preserving these green spaces is an environmental justice priority.

Parks also build and sustain community life. The Garfield Super Block area is known to neighborhood residents as “Little City Hall.” From games at the baseball field to the annual Martin Luther King Jr. March and Celebration and, more recently, COVID testing and vaccination events, it is a hub of community life and the heart and soul of the Central District.

“This is where everybody came...because basically, all the other parks in the city, Black folks couldn’t go to. So, we built our own,” says Stephens. **“We want to leave a piece of that history here and to leave a legacy for our kids and grandkids [so they] can be proud of their community. There’s a spirit here that makes them feel wanted, like they’ll always have a space.”**

Ways to Get Involved:

The Garfield Super Block Project is fiscally sponsored by Seattle Parks Foundation. As the project moves into the construction phase, the team is seeking funding to hire a project manager and support its Arts Advisory Committee.

You can contribute at **Seattle Parks Foundation — Garfield Super Block** and send any inquiries about the project to **info@seattleparksfoundation.org**.

A Look Toward the Future of Citywide Green Space

Outside Citywide is a visionary project of Seattle's Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) to expand, improve, and connect the city's open spaces in collaboration with communities, the private and nonprofit sectors, and other city and county agencies. Seattle Parks Foundation CEO Rebecca Bear spoke with the project's leader, Cayce James, OPCD's strategic advisor on public space and environmental justice.

Rebecca Bear: Can you tell us about the project, and how it came about?

Cayce James: The Outside Citywide Initiative was formed around the time the city was putting together the 2016 comprehensive plan. There was growing awareness of the need for collaboration and coordination between the different departments—the Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle Parks and Recreation, and Seattle Public Utilities, among others—that manage parks and open space.

Folks put together an interdepartmental team and started strategizing around coordinating better. At that point, pre-COVID, we were facing rapid growth, and our opportunities to acquire new parks and expand our existing public space system were getting more limited. Displacement was a huge issue that was accompanying that, and folks also wanted to improve equity of access to parks in the city.

RB: And part of your work with Outside Citywide is to identify green spaces in the city—even beyond parks—and identify what we need?

CJ: Yeah. To better understand the public space system across the different departments, agencies, and divisions, we gathered existing data about where the spaces are, including things like shoreline street ends, cemeteries, and campuses. From that compilation, we looked at what areas of the city were better- and worse-served by our existing assets.

We looked at how big the space is, what type of space

it is, and walking accessibility, among other things, because a tiny parklet on your street corner doesn't serve you in the same way that Discovery Park does. We included demographic, racial equity, and public health data to help us identify priority areas. That's helped make sure our investments go where people need them most and has facilitated more collaboration across departments, who were able to use that same analysis.

RB: When it comes to these analyses—equity, climate, displacement, health outcomes—which neighborhoods did you identify as having the greatest need?

CJ: You get different results if you look at those different factors. Some neighborhoods, like Rainier Beach, have a lot of acres of public space—including schoolyards, playfields, parks, etc.—but still see poor public health outcomes directly related to people's ability to exercise and spend time outside. For that neighborhood, acquisitions aren't the main strategy; we need to improve existing spaces and connectivity. We also need to make sure that spaces feel safe and welcoming to folks, and that they are designed and programmed in ways that are culturally informed and respond to the interests and needs of neighborhood residents.

RB: If you wanted to start righting the wrongs done in those communities, what's the easiest place to start?

CJ: One of the most important changes we can make, without additional resources, is for project funders to rethink how they're relating to community members and how power and resources are distributed through their processes. There's a tendency to pay for expertise from outside of communities, go in with a well-developed plan, then ask for community feedback on it. We can rethink that at every stage.

Race + Social Equity Map

Supporting community members to have leadership in what's being developed in their neighborhood achieves multiple benefits, and your resources often go much further. Built outcomes reflect and bolster neighborhood identities, and you can also meet more community-identified needs like jobs, housing, safety, and air quality.

RB: Are there parks or communities that you see as good examples of what that community-based approach looks like?

CJ: I love the 11th Street Bridge project in D.C. Recognizing that a new bridge park would likely facilitate gentrification, they are trying to address that before project work begins. They worked with the community to come up with several equitable development strategies around housing and employment and have begun implementing those before the park development work begins.

RB: Where have you seen the most need for us to support neighborhoods to address the climate crisis?

CJ: Climate change is here. Neighborhoods along the Duwamish Valley already experience flooding issues because of their elevation and proximity to the river, and these are going to worsen in the future. We need more multi-benefit green infrastructure solutions that can protect communities from future climate impacts, while providing green space and immediate benefits. Madison Stormwater Park, an open space that collects floodwaters in a storm event, is a great local existing example of that.

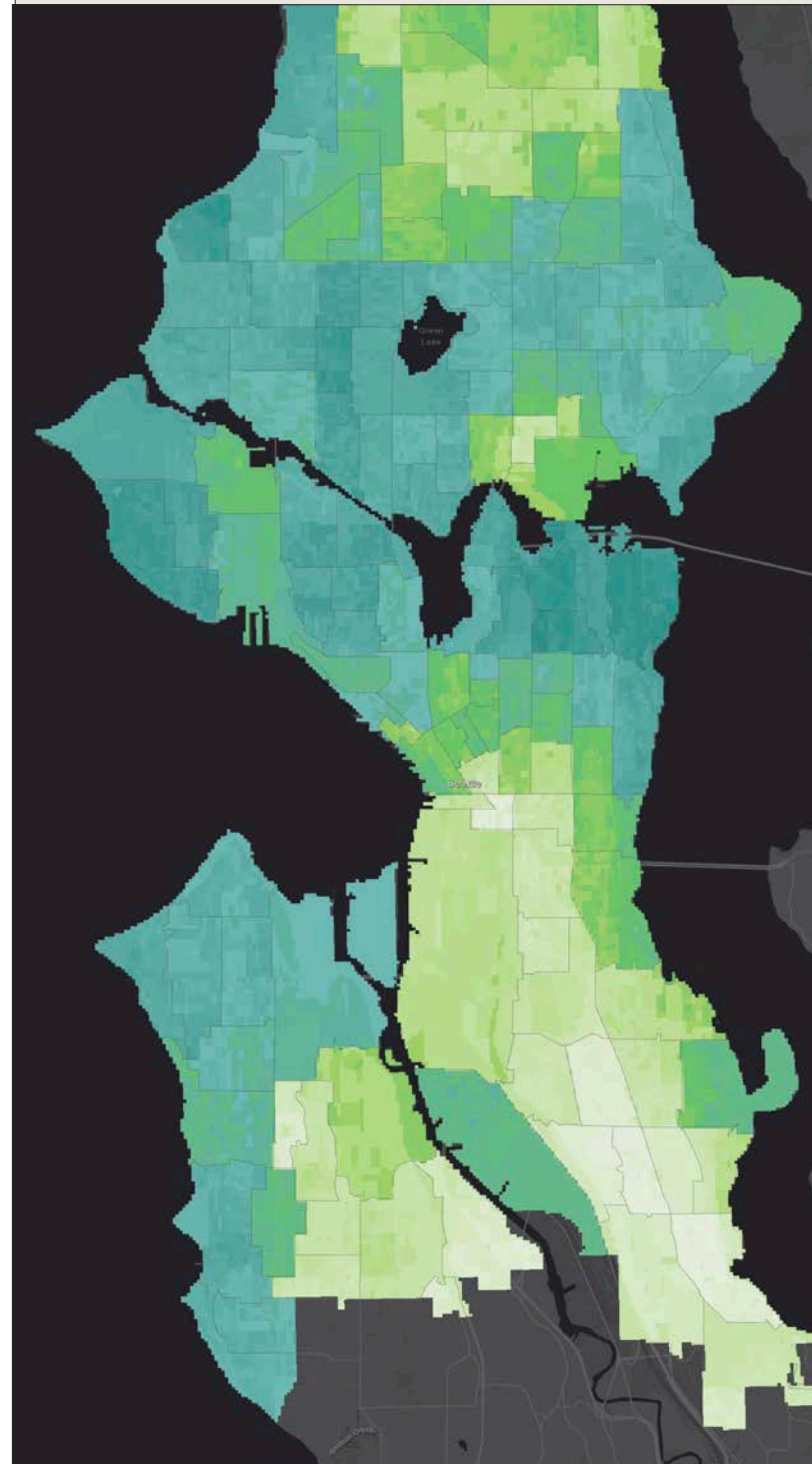
RB: Thank you very much for your leadership with this work at the city-wide level. It's through research and mapping like this that we can really understand the challenges we face and see where we need to work for a more equitable Seattle.

CJ: You're Welcome!

Seattle Parks Foundation, along with Seattle Parks and Recreation, is partnering with OPCD to look at how the Outside Citywide vision can be realized through community engagement and real-world solutions.

Learn more about Outside Citywide at

www.seattle.gov/opcd/outsidcitywide.



Low Priority

High Priority

New Partners:

- **Cultivate South Park**
- **Friends of Georgetown History (FoGHI)**
- **Golden Gardens Volleyball Pole Replacement**
- **HOSTED Healthy Othello Safer Through Enviro Design**
- **It Takes A Village - Juneteenth Celebration**
- **Judkins Park P-Patch**
- **Leafline Trails Coalition**
- **Queen Anne Neighborhood Night Out - 1st Ave West**
- **Rainier Beach Playfield Skatepark**

New Staff Introductions



Elias Arkham

Administrative Coordinator.
Favorite local park: Fremont Peak Park



Anna Guthrie

Program Coordinator.
Favorite local park: Carkeek Park



Falisha Kurji

Community Partnership Coordinator.
Favorite local park: Washington Park Arboretum



Kristen Milliron

VP of Philanthropy, Marketing & Communications.
Favorite local park: Discovery Park



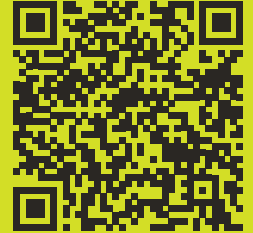
Upcoming Events:

Love Parks: A Virtual Celebration of Seattle's Community Spaces

Tuesday, November 9th 6:30pm

Please register at seattleparksfoundation.org/events

or scan the code to the right to visit the registration page



SEATTLE PARKS FOUNDATION

PO Box 3541
Seattle, WA 98124-3541

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