

## RSJI Racial Equity Toolkit Assessment Memorandum

### Waterfront Seattle – Park Boulevard Designation Ordinance

The Office of the Waterfront and Civic Projects (OWCP) is proposing an ordinance to designate the reconfigured Alaskan Way, Waterfront Promenade, Overlook Walk, and other portions of right-of-way along the Central Waterfront as park boulevards, and to authorize the transfer of jurisdiction from the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation (SPR) over portions of the park boulevards for purposes of effective operation and maintenance. This proposed ordinance is intended to ensure continuous and effective management of the new waterfront under one consistent jurisdiction and provide clarity and flexibility for users.

**Department:** The Office of the Waterfront and Civic Projects (OWCP)/SDOT      **Contact:** Tiffani Melake

#### Step 1: Outcomes

##### **1a. What does OWCP define as the most important racially equitable community outcomes related to the issue?**

The City's core goal with the new waterfront is to create a "Waterfront for All" - a public space that will be welcoming, safe and appealing to users from diverse backgrounds, ages and abilities. In order to do that, the new public spaces needs to be managed under one consistent model in terms of how maintenance and programming is made available, what code of conduct and rules are established, etc. The park boulevard designation allows for an operations and maintenance model that is applied equitably to all users. The park boulevard designation will also facilitate the partnership between SPR and Friends of Waterfront Seattle, which will provide a significant increase in diverse recreational and cultural programming, and higher level of maintenance. That partnership will make the park more safe, appealing, and accessible to the full range of communities in our city.

##### **1b. Which racial equity opportunity area(s) will the issue primarily impact?**

The City of Seattle, in partnership with the community, is working to eliminate racial disparities and create racial equity in seven areas, including: Education, Health, Community Development, Criminal Justice, Jobs, Housing, and the Environment. The park boulevard designation ordinance would primarily impact the environment and criminal justice.

##### **1c. Impacts on contracting equity, workforce equity, immigrant and refugee access to services, or inclusive outreach and public engagement?**

This proposal effects how park operations are done. Contracting equity and workforce equity are not directly related to the park boulevard designation ordinance, but the designation helps further our partnership with Friends of Waterfront Seattle. The City's partnership agreement with Friends includes workforce equity provisions and identifies Parks' union labor as the maintainers of the park boulevard and park facilities being constructed on the Waterfront. Strengthening our partnership will ensure these provisions can continue to be met. The proposal could also impact inclusive outreach and public engagement, since more people would be anticipated to visit the new waterfront and experience the diverse programing anticipated to be provided by Friends. Finally, the partnership with friends includes

provisions for outreach and enforcement to individuals experiencing crisis or homelessness. Strengthening the partnership helps ensure these services continue.

## Step 2: Involve Stakeholders. Analyze Data.

### **2a. Are there impacts on geographic areas?**

Yes. The primary impact will be to central Seattle, in the geographic area surrounding the streets proposed to be designated as park boulevards. Increased visitation and investment in that area may have ancillary impacts city-wide.

### **2b. What are the racial demographics of those living in the area or impacted by the issue?**

Approximately 34% of the population within the census tract where the proposed park boulevards are proposed to be located are persons of color.

### **2c. How have you involved community members and stakeholders?**

Planning for the new Central Waterfront has been ongoing for nearly 20 years and there has been extensive community and stakeholder involvement every step of the way, including dozens of public meetings and large-scale civic events that helped to shape the plan for improving the waterfront. The Office of the Waterfront and Civic Projects also engaged the community and stakeholders through a Central Waterfront Committee and the Central Waterfront Oversight Committee, both of which were established by the Mayor and City Council to advise the City in preparing the plans and operations for the Central Waterfront. All of this community involvement is based on a set of Guiding Principles that emphasize the importance of creating an open, inviting, democratic series of public places to serve the city and the region.

### **2d. What does data and your conversations with stakeholders tell you about existing racial inequities that influence people's lives and should be taken into consideration?**

The proposed park boulevards are located in downtown Seattle, which is an area that is predominantly higher-income and less diverse than other parts of the City, but also has areas with a significant homeless population or other populations that are experiencing crisis. Based on conversations with stakeholders, accessing the Central Waterfront, including the proposed park boulevards, can be difficult for communities of color given the challenges of parking, etc. There is also a concern whether the programming and activities in the new park boulevards will appeal to move diverse communities.

In implementing rules/code of conduct for the newly designated park boulevards, the City can create one set of clear and consistent rules that everyone will be able to follow. The park boulevard allows for us to help persons experiencing crisis or homelessness, which can be seen at a higher rate for persons of color, with outreach services. Discussions involving the Central Waterfront Oversight Committee, Friends of Waterfront Seattle, and various other stakeholders have centered around diversity, inclusivity, and community engagement around programming. OWCP and Parks have incorporated, and will continue to incorporate and continually improve, provisions to address Public Benefit, Equity and Inclusion in all agreements related to future management of the Park Boulevard and the Waterfront overall.

## **2e. What are the root causes of factors creating these racial inequities?**

Long-standing land use patterns – i.e. downtown population demographics and housing costs, lack of frequent reliable transit, perceptions of downtown being ‘for’ one population vis a vis another. The perception that the park boulevards will be primarily for the downtown population, which is predominately Caucasian with a higher median income.

### Step 3: Determine Benefit and/or Burden

#### **3. How will the policy, initiative, program, or budget issue increase or decrease racial equity? What are the unintended consequences? What benefits might result? Are the impacts aligned with your department’s community outcomes that were defined in Step 1?**

The waterfront park boulevard ordinance is not anticipated to decrease racial equity and may increase racial equity by creating a new public space that is welcoming to all. In establishing the park boulevard, we are able to use our Parks/Friends model of operations and maintenance, which will support more diverse, inclusive programming to help attract communities of color to enjoy the new parks; it will also help us provide services and outreach to people and help eliminate the first response to enforcement, which can have biases towards persons of color.

### Step 4: Advance Opportunity or Minimize Harm

#### **4. How will you address the impacts (including consequences) on racial equity? What strategies address immediate impacts? What strategies address root causes of inequality? How will you partner with stakeholders for long term positive change? If impacts are not aligned with desired community outcomes, how will you re-align your work?**

As stated earlier the pilot Operations and Management Agreement with Friends of Waterfront Seattle that was approved by Council includes Public Benefit, Equity and Inclusion provisions. In addition, OWCP is collaborating with Friends of Waterfront Seattle to create a park programming panel, which will help lead our work in community outreach and programming opportunities to all Seattle neighborhoods. Waterfront operations and maintenance staff will participate in RSJI led trainings to help reduce racial bias and unconscious racial profiling of park users.

### Step 5: Evaluate. Raise Racial Awareness. Be Accountable.

#### **5a. How will you evaluate and be accountable? How will you evaluate and report impacts on racial equity over time? What is your goal and timeline for eliminating racial inequity? How will you retain stakeholder participation and ensure internal and public accountability? How will you raise awareness about racial inequity related to this issue?**

OWCP is developing a performance standard with the Central Waterfront Oversight Committee, which will include metrics on evaluating programming diversity, inclusivity, incidents, and surveys of park user experience. Friends of Waterfront Seattle will continue to work with the committee, as well as the city, on gathering data and annually report on that data. The data will help us consistently track our performance, not just on traditional maintenance metrics but also on who is being served by the new park, and how we are managing safety and security incidents and make needed changes over time.

**5b. What is unresolved? What resources/partnerships do you need to make changes?**

We will need to continue to assess any impacts using the Parks Code of Conduct and rules on equity for all users of the Waterfront Park Boulevard. Efforts are still needed to ensure we design new programming to appeal directly to the needs of diverse users – not our ideas of what those users would like. This requires an on-going commitment to repeated, in-depth working relationships with real people in community, in addition to organizations and individuals who claim to represent community.

[Step 6: Report Back](#)

OWCP, Friends and SPR will be reporting out on metrics gathered in relation to the park performance standard annually to the Mayor’s Office and City Council, as well as the general public and park users, including a report back on impacts on racial equity over time, retaining stakeholder participation, and what changes need to be made.