SEATTLE PARKS AND RECREATION (SPR)

2026 PROPOSED BUDGET

OVERVIEW & POLICY CONSIDERATIONS PAPER

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Table 1. Department Budget Summary

Budget Summary Level	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	% Change	2026 Proposed	% Change
Operating Budget					
Departmentwide Programs	$22.4M	$23.2M	3.7%	$22.6M	(2.9%)
Golf Programs	$18.3M	$18.5M	0.7%	$18.4M	(0.3%)
Leadership and Administration	$52.4M	$54.6M	4.2%	$56.2M	2.9%
Parks and Facilities Maintenance and Repairs	$102.1M	$107.6M	5.4%	$108.7M	1.0%
Recreation Facility Programs	$54.2M	$55.8M	3.0%	$56.3M	0.8%
Zoo and Aquarium Programs	$9.2M	$9.4M	2.3%	$9.4M	0.0%
Operating Subtotal:	**$258.6M**	**$269.2M**	**4.1%**	**$271.5M**	**0.9%**
Capital Budget					
Building For the Future	$6.9M	$7.0M	1.3%	$7.0M	(0.0%)
Debt and Special Funding	$5.0M	$10.1M	100.9%	$3.4M	(66.6%)
Fix It First	$71.5M	$219.4M	206.8%	$75.5M	(65.6%)
Maintaining Parks and Facilities	$1.8M	$1.8M	0.9%	$1.8M	0.0%
CIP Subtotal:	**$85.3M**	**$238.4M**	**179.4%**	**$87.7M**	**(63.2%)**
Total:	**$344.0M**	**$507.6M**	**47.6%**	**$359.2M**	**(29.2%)**

I. OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

The 2026 Proposed Budget for Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) decreases 29.2 percent relative to the 2026 Endorsed Budget, reflecting about a one percent increase in SPR’s operating budget and 63.2 percent decrease in SPR’s capital budget.

The proposed increase in SPR’s operating budget reflects higher labor costs in 2026 based on the annual wage and market wage adjustments; increased funding for Seattle Park District (Park District) investments per the Cycle 2 Financial Plan; and new investments (e.g., graffiti abatement, Park Rangers, youth programming, public restroom access, and Park District Cycle 2 commitments). Many of these changes are achieved through use of fund balances, shifting funds within SPR’s budget, and department transfers.

The proposed decrease in SPR’s capital budget is primarily due to shifting $151 million of planned bond funding from 2026 to 2027 to align with updated project delivery schedules for five community center projects; this is the second consecutive year that the budget shifts the timing of planned bond issuances for these projects. Other changes include increases for public restroom capital needs; a Gas Works Park safety project; contractually required improvements at Leschi Moorage; and a decrease in the Park District Fund to align debt service costs with updated project timelines.

A. Operating Budget

SPR's 2026 Proposed Operating Budget ($271.5 million) increases about 1.0 percent ($2.3 million) relative to SPR 2026 Endorsed Operating Budget ($269.2 million).

Notable changes in SPR's operating budget include:

- **One-time adjustment of Park District funding to address General Fund deficit** ($7.5 million Park District Fund). Two changes in Park District funding achieve one-time General Fund savings: $3.5 million Park District Fund underspend resulting from the citywide hiring freeze and lower than forecasted Annual Wage Increase (AWI) retroactive payments in the prior years; and $4.0 million Park District Fund that is no longer needed in 2026 for debt payment obligations due to changes in the project delivery schedules for five community center development projects. This Park District funding is a one-time "swap" for General Fund support of the grounds maintenance line of business in 2026 only. See related item "Adjustment of Park District funded debt service" in the Capital Budget section.
- **Youth programming** ($2.4 million FEPP Levy 2025). The proposed Families, Education, Preschool, and Promise (FEPP) levy proposal includes ongoing funding for citywide youth programs, including out of school programs at Seattle Public School sites, Red Barn Ranch programs, and restoration of the 2026 Endorsed Budget reduction for citywide environmental youth programming and the Discovery Park Environmental Learning and Visitor Center operations and 7.35 FTE. Of the $2.4 million investment of FEPP Levy funds in SPR, $1.3 million is used for fund swaps (i.e., $720,000 to replace General Fund, $600,000 to replace Payroll Expense Tax) and the balance of $1.1 million reflects a budget increase in SPR.
- **Graffiti abatement** ($1.28 million General Fund and 2.0 FTE). The proposed budget moves graffiti abatement resources from Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) to SPR, transferring $602,000 General Fund and 1.0 FTE for graffiti nuisance code enforcement and about $175,000 for graffiti abatement on Seattle Department of Transportation's (SDOT's) parking pay stations. The transfer also includes the budget for an additional 1.0 FTE to complete the two-person graffiti enforcement team. The ongoing General Fund savings (due to removal of SPU overhead rates) from the SPU transfer is about $244,000 annually. An additional ongoing General Fund investment of $500,000 further supports graffiti abatement and prevention programs, including cross-agency partnerships. This investment is part of the "One Seattle Graffiti Plan" in the proposed budget that adds $1.6 million and 6.0 FTE across SPR, the Office of Arts and Culture, and SDOT, resulting in a total 2026 investment of $6.1 million.
- **Public restroom maintenance** ($515,000 General Fund and 3.7 FTE). The proposed budget restores funding (removed in the 2025 Adopted Budget) and adds 3.7 FTE on an ongoing basis for parks maintenance with an emphasis on cleaning restrooms during peak season and implementing recommendations in the City Auditor's 2025 Restroom Audit. This item is funded from a realignment of baseline resources no longer needed to support debt service for a Magnuson Park capital project, as the debt has been fully paid.
- **Park Rangers expansion** ($500,000 General Fund and 3.0 FTE). SPR's Park Rangers program expands from 28 to 31 to enhance support for the Downtown Activation Team and add capacity for parks citywide. The proposal includes the addition of a supervisor and two park ranger positions as well as funding for increased maintenance at downtown parks. This item is funded by ongoing General Fund resources.
- **Organizational Capacity** ($311,000 Park District Fund and 2.0 FTE). SPR's internal human resources and accounting teams grow by two positions to support hiring, vendor payment processing, and other "back of house" functions that help the department meet Park District Cycle 2 commitments. This item is funded by ongoing Park District Funds available after adjusting costs for 2026 AWIs and retirement contributions that were forecasted at a higher rate than realized.

- **Pay compression corrections** ($222,000 from General Fund, Park District Fund, and Park and Recreation Fund). Pay rate adjustments within the Coalition of City Unions Bargaining created compression or inversion issues for several non-represented job classifications across the City. This proposal increases appropriations ongoing ($106,000 General Fund, $99,000 Park District Fund, $18,000 Park and Recreation Fund) to correct compression for three job classifications at SPR and impacts pay for 11 positions. This item is funded by available resources in each of these funds.

B. Capital Budget

SPR's 2026 Proposed Capital Budget ($87.7 million) decreases 63.2 percent ($151 million) relative to the 2026 Endorsed Capital Budget ($238.4 million). The vast majority of this decrease results from shifting planned bond funding from 2026 to 2027 to align with updated project delivery schedules for five community center projects.

Other notable changes in SPR's capital budget include:

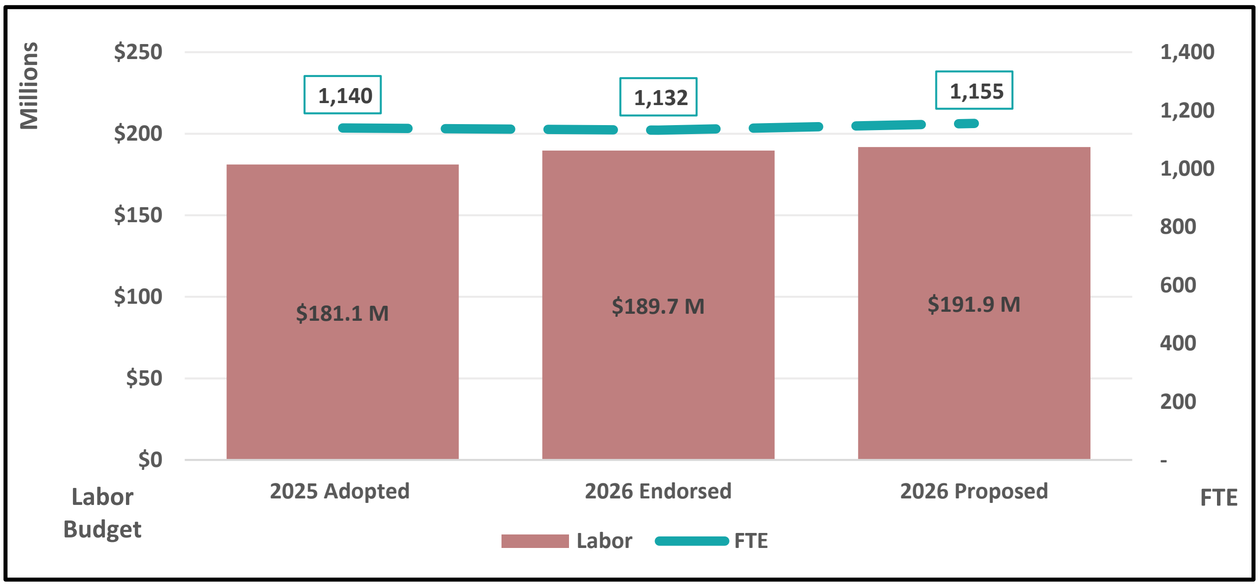
- **Public restroom projects** ($2 million REET I). This item adds one-time funding to support public restroom access, including funds to mitigate insurance deductible obligations related to restroom vandalism and to fulfill the Park District Cycle 2 goal of weatherizing 60 restrooms to prevent winter closures. Costs for restroom weatherization renovations at nine sites are higher than initially estimated by about 15 percent. This item is funded through one-time REET I resources.
- **Gas Works Park safety** ($1.8 million Park and Recreation Fund). This item adds one-time funding to increase safety at Gas Works Parks, including the removal of certain permanent fixtures known as "appurtenances" (e.g., catwalks, ladders, select piping and valving) and installation of security lighting. This item is funded by a one-time fund balance.
- **Leschi Moorage improvements** ($1 million King County Levy Fund). This item adds one-time funding to support contractually required improvements at the Leschi Moorage that include adding a large floating breakwater with a boat sewage pump-out facility. Costs for this project (currently funded by REET and state/federal grants) have increased due to permitting delays and additional environmental requirements which have expanded the scope of the original design. This item is funded by a one-time fund balance.
- **Green Lake Community Center renovation** ($2.7 million Park District Fund in 2026 and $17 million in additional bond financing anticipated in 2027). This item makes several changes to support renovation of the Green Lake Community Center and Evans Pool in one phase rather than two phases:
    - One-time $2.7 million to support the planning and design of a one-phase Green Lake project. Funding is available from Park District Funds originally allocated to debt service obligations that are not needed for this purpose in 2026. See related item "Adjust Park District-Funded debt service."
    - The Limited Tax General Obligation (LTGO) bond funding increases from $56 million to $73 million and the bond issuance shifts from 2026 to 2027 to align with updated project cost estimates and schedules. Funding for the debt service associated with the higher bond issuance is partially supported by Park District Fund originally planned to pay debt service for bond issuance of unreinforced masonry efforts (URM); the funding for seismic retrofits of URM is not yet needed and is pending a citywide ordinance. This item also then removes planned LTGO bond funding ($4.5 million in 2026 and $4.5 million in 2027 from the Proposed CIP). See related item "Alignment of bond issuance for community center renovation projects with schedules" for changes to bond issuance for four other community centers.
- **Alignment of bond issuance for community center renovation projects with schedules**. This technical item shifts $90.9 million of LTGO bond funding from 2026 to 2027 to align planned bond issuance with updated project schedules for the other four community center projects: 8^{th} & Mercer, Lake City Community Center, Loyal Heights Community Center, and Queen Anne Community Center major

renovation projects. See related item “Adjustment of Park District-Funded debt service” for associated debt service payments and “Green Lake Community Center Renovation” for changes to the Green Lake Community Center and Evans Pool Renovation and URM bond funding and issuance.

- **Adjustment of Park District-Funded debt service.** This item reduces $6.7 million of Park District Fund for planned debt service for community center projects and shifts the debt service to 2027 to align with updated capital project scope and schedules for these projects. In addition, it increases the debt service payments for all community center projects beginning in 2027 due to updated project debt service rates as well as the $17 million increase in bond issuance for the Green Lake Community Center and Evans Pool project and removes planned debt service for URM projects as the Proposed CIP removes bond issuance for this purpose. The one-time savings from this reduction in 2026 are reallocated to other priority needs: $4 million to fund grounds maintenance line of business (previously funded by the General Fund) to address the General Fund deficit and $2.7 million to support the planning and design of the Green Lake Community Center and Evans Pool in one phase.

C. FTE & Labor Changes

Figure 1. FTE & Labor Budget Summary



The 2026 Proposed Budget includes 15.7 FTE more than the 2026 Endorsed Budget, reflecting the addition of 17.7 FTE and abrogation of 2.0 FTE (i.e., vacant park safety positions that are no longer needed due to the Park Ranger expansion). Most of the additional positions (14.7 FTE) are budget neutral or offset by other budget adjustments as follows:

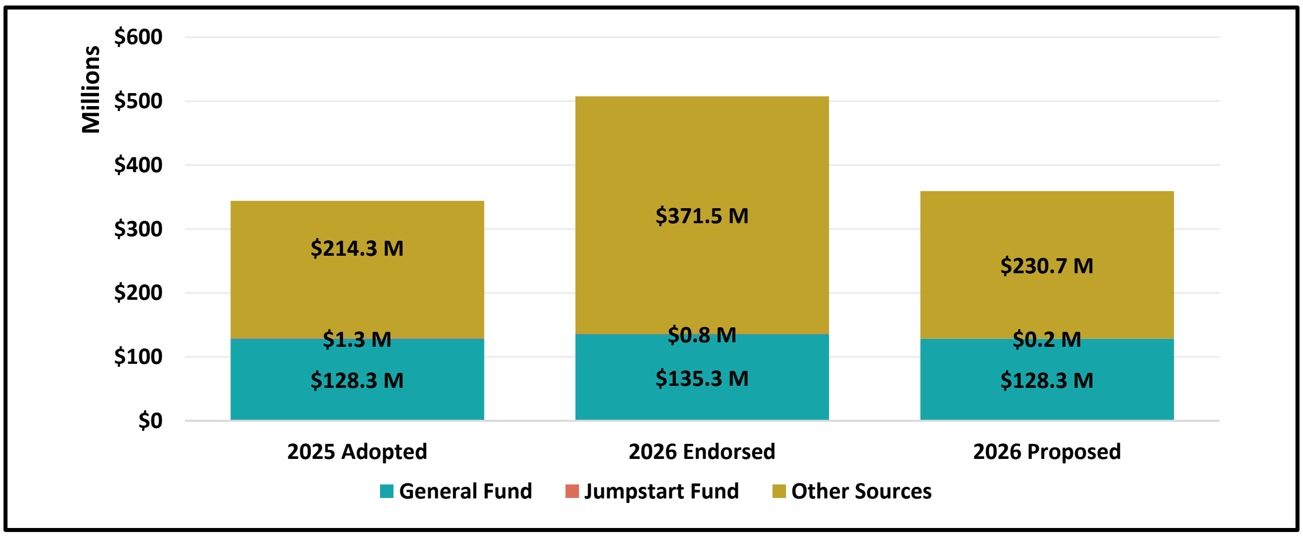
- 5.0 FTE for support of capital project delivery anticipated in the second half of the Park District Cycle 2. These positions are funded through existing appropriations in capital projects.
- 3.7 FTE for park maintenance, including four part-time positions to provide additional restroom cleaning during peak season and one position to implement recommendations in the City Auditor’s 2025 Restroom Audit. This item reinstates parks maintenance funding that was removed in the 2025 Adopted Budget. The positions are funded through a realignment of baseline General Fund resources no longer needed to support debt service for a Magnuson Park capital project, as the debt has been fully paid.
- 3.0 FTE for expansion of SPR’s Park Ranger program to include a supervisor and two additional park rangers. This item is intended to enhance support for the Downtown Activation Team and add capacity for parks citywide. The positions are funded by an ongoing General Fund increase.

- 2.0 FTE for graffiti code enforcement. The positions are funded by transferring General Fund resources for the graffiti nuisance code enforcement team from SPU to SPR.
- 2.0 FTE for support of internal HR and accounting functions to help meet Park District Cycle 2 commitments. The positions are funded by ongoing Park District Funds available after adjusting costs for 2026 AWIs and retirement contributions that were forecasted at a higher rate than realized.
- 1.0 FTE to correctly align budgets and accounts with position changes that occurred outside the previous budget process (e.g., position reclassifications, changes to position hours). This is a technical change that is budget neutral.
- 1.0 FTE to reflect a position added through separate legislation (ORD 127304) related to supporting the Sound Transit 3 program, managed city-wide though the Office of the Waterfront, Civic Projects, and Sound Transit. This position is funded by the transportation revenues.

The 2026 Proposed Budget also abrogates 2.0 FTE for park safety. These vacant positions were intended to support compliance with off-leash area compliance and are no longer needed due to the proposed expansion of the park ranger program. Removing the positions allows SPR to realign resources to right size funding for three animal control officers for a park safety program supported by Park District Funds.

D. Fund Appropriations Summary

Figure 2. Fund Appropriations Summary



SPR relies on multiple funds to support appropriations. The General Fund and Park District Fund are the largest sources of funding, almost equally matched in the 2026 Proposed Budget.

As a requirement of the interlocal agreement (ILA) between the City of Seattle and the Park District, SPR's budget must include a minimum General Fund contribution of at least $126,879,649 (reflecting adjustment of the 2025 General Fund floor of $123,469,4444 for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Seattle, which was 2.6 percent for 2025). The proposed allocation of $128.3 million General Fund meets and exceeds this requirement.

The proposed allocation of $128.9 million Park District Fund includes investments in 2026 for the second six-year cycle (Cycle 2) of Seattle Park District Financial Plan running from 2023 through 2028. Please note that table 2 shows appropriations by fund, and not the total revenues available. For example, the revenues available for the

Park District fund in 2026 total $136.5 million and of this amount, $128.9 million is allocated to SPR and $7.6 million is allocated to Seattle Center for Waterfront operations and maintenance.

Fund changes in the 2026 Proposed Budget relative to the 2026 Endorsed Budget include the following:

Operating

- $7.7 million increase in Park District Fund to replace General Fund support for grounds maintenance and reflect technical changes;
- $2.4 million increase in the FEPP Levy Fund per FEPP Levy renewal plan to support youth programming previously supported by other funds;
- $7 million decrease in General Fund to address the General Fund deficit;
- $600,000 decrease in Payroll Expense Tax (replaced by FEPP Levy funding); and
- $178,000 decrease in Park and Recreation Fund to reflect technical changes (e.g., adjustments to address pay compression, AWI and retirement costs, standard costs, and budget neutral changes).

Capital

- $2 million increase in Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) funds to address restroom capital needs;
- $1.8 million increase in Park and Recreation Fund to support a Gas Works Park Safety capital project;
- $1 million increase in King County Parks Levy Fund to support contractually required capital investments at Leschi Moorage; and
- $4 million decrease in the Park District Fund to align debt service costs with capital project timelines and shift these funds to the Park District operating budget for grounds maintenance.

Table 2. Fund Appropriations Summary

Revenue Fund	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	% Change	2026 Proposed	% Change
Seattle Park District Fund	$124.9M	$125.4M	0.4%	$128.9M	2.8%
General Fund	$128.3M	$135.3M	5.5%	$128.3M	(5.2%)
Park and Recreation Fund	$50.4M	$53.3M	5.7%	$55.1M	3.4%
REET I Capital Fund	$15.5M	$11.9M	(23.2%)	$13.9M	16.8%
REET II Capital Fund	$16.9M	$26.2M	55.3%	$26.2M	0.0%
King County Parks Levy Fund	$2.9M	$2.9M	(2.0%)	$3.8M	35.0%
FEPP Levy 2025	$0.0M	$0.0M	0.0%	$2.4M	100%
Sweetened Beverage Tax Fund	$0.3M	$0.4M	4.0%	$0.4M	(1.0%)
Payroll Expense Tax	$1.3M	$0.8M	(40.8%)	$0.2M	(76.3%)
2026 Multipurpose LTGO Bond Fund	$0.0M	$151.5M	100%	$0.0M	(100.0%)
General Bond Interest and Redemption Fund	$3.2M	$0.0M	(100.0%)	$0.0M	0.0%
Unrestricted Cumulative Reserve Fund	$0.2M	$0.0M	(81.1%)	$0.0M	0.0%
Total by Revenue Fund	**$344.0M**	**$507.6M**	**47.6%**	**$359.2M**	**(29.2%)**

II. ISSUES FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION DURING BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

Central Staff did not identify any specific issues in their review to date on SPR's proposed budget.

III. BUDGET LEGISLATION

1. SPR 2026 Fees and Charges ORD

SPR charges programming and usage fees to provide financial support for department programs, facilities, and park grounds. The proposed legislation would include the following changes:

- Administrative and technical adjustments to the fee and charges schedule (e.g., remove reference to 2025 fees in all sections);
- Updates to the Revocable Use Permits to reflect fee adjustments approved in the 2025 Adopted and 2026 Endorsed Budget that were not included in the 2025 Fees and Charges Ordinance (ORD 127143); and
- Creation of a tiered fee structure for Use Permits for ticketed events to reflect variable seating capacity at different venues (e.g., higher fee for an outdoor park that accommodates 10,000 people and lower fee for an outdoor stadium that accommodates 1,000 to 3,000 people).

None of the proposed changes would impact SPR's 2026 baseline revenues from fees and charges that were approved in the 2025 Adopted and 2026 Endorsed Budget. The change to the Use Permit fees for ticketed events is not expected to have material impacts on revenues given the small number of these events annually.

2. MO Graffiti Nuisance Code Updates ORD

The proposed legislation would establish the authority necessary for SPR to enforce the City's graffiti nuisance code and remove such authority from SPU. Along with the 2026 Proposed Budget proposal to transfer all labor and non-labor budget associated with graffiti nuisance enforcement from SPU to SPR, this legislation would effectively complete the transfer of graffiti abatement efforts and enforcement programming from SPU to SPR. The legislation would have no direct financial costs; it is intended to improve the cost efficiency of the City's graffiti abatement response and is necessary for SPR to conduct enforcement activities.

3. CBO 2025 Year-End Acceptance ORD

The proposed legislation would accept over $1.36 million awarded to SPR from non-City sources as follows:

- Washington State Department of Ecology ($720,000 Park and Recreation Fund) for support of the Lake City Floodplain Park Development project to improve water quality in Thornton Creek and water quality improvements through green stormwater infrastructure at Washington Park Arboretum.
- United States Consumer Product Safety Commission ($399,358 Park and Recreation Fund) for pool safety efforts (e.g. audit to ensure compliance with federal safety laws) and drowning prevention programs (e.g., free swim lessons within Swim Seattle program); and
- King County Cooperative Watershed Program ($245,000 Park and Recreation Fund) for preliminary design at Herring's House Park Shoreline Restoration to make habitat improvements for juvenile salmon.

4. **CBO 2025 Year-End Supplemental ORD**

   The proposed legislation would adjust the 2025 Adopted Budget to reflect increased appropriations of $3.3 million related to capital projects, contract payments, insurance claims, and grant awards; and reductions of about $1.6 million mostly related to grant-abandonment (i.e., funds are no longer necessary because the project is complete or the grant has expired).

   Notable increases include:

   - Increase appropriation authority ($1.0 million Park and Recreation Fund) for renovations, supported by one-time fund balance, at SPR's 100 Dexter Avenue North Building to create a single, central location for Park Ranger and Graffiti Abatement staff;
   - Increase appropriations ($350,000 General Fund) for Graffiti Abatement to fulfill remaining six months of a one-year 2025 contract with Uplift Northwest for graffiti abatement services; and
   - Increase grant-backed appropriation authority ($780,000 Park and Recreation Fund) for the Stan Sayres Boat Ramp Renovation project to address cost escalation related to Army Corp of Engineers permits;
   - Increase appropriations ($500,000 General Fund) for one-time improvements for Parks Summer Safety Strategy projects, including installation of gates and fences at high priority parks, locking and cleaning restrooms to prevent vandalism, adding barriers to deter reckless driving in parking lots, and increasing Park Ranger presence at popular park locations;
   - Increase revenue-backed appropriation authority ($434,136 Park and Recreation Fund) to accept insurance proceeds (related to fire damage) from a settlement for the Lake City Community Center Redevelopment project to support construction for the new Lake City Community Center;
   - Increase appropriations ($200,000 2008 Parks Levy Fund) to close out the Victor Steinbrueck Park construction project.

   Notable reductions include:

   - Abandon appropriation authority for Pathways Park ($724,544 Park and Recreation Fund), Be'er Sheva Park Improvements ($373,981 Park and Recreation Fund), because the projects are complete and appropriations are no longer needed;
   - Abandon appropriations authority for Smith Cove Development ($150,000 Park and Recreation Fund) because the grant has expired the appropriations are no longer needed; and
   - Abandon revenue-backed appropriation authority ($271,700 Park and Recreation Fund) for Northwest Native Canoe Center to reflect an amended agreement with United Indians of All Tribes to reduce reimbursement for construction of the Canoe Carving House.

5. **CBO 2026 Annual Grant Acceptance ORD**

   The proposed legislation would accept over $1.0 million awarded to SPR from non-City sources for projects in the 2026 fiscal year as follows:

   - Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development ($808,000 General Fund) for the Seattle Conservation Corps (SCC), a jobs training program for homeless adults operated by SPR, or capital projects in low-income neighborhoods that are performed by the SCC; and
   - Washington State Department of Commerce ($276,922 Park and Recreation Fund) for Community Services Block Grants (federal and state) for the SCC.