

Status Report on Implementation of Office of City Auditor Recommendations as of December 2024

May 19, 2025

David G. Jones, City Auditor



Seattle Office of City Auditor

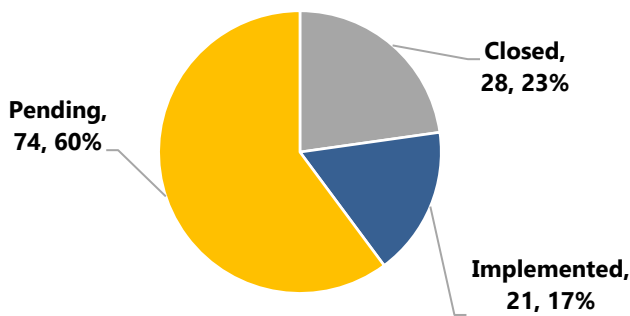
Status Report on Implementation of Office of City Auditor Recommendations as of December 2024

Summary and Results

The Office of City Auditor follows the implementation status of its audit recommendations and reports annually on the results to the Seattle City Council. This process provides an opportunity for our office, the City Council, and audited City of Seattle (City) departments to review the results of our past audit work. We appreciate the cooperation of the many City departments involved in this effort.

Overall, we have tracked 928 recommendations contained in 87 audit reports since January 2007, of which 72% have been implemented (see Appendix B). This report details the status of 115 recommendations reported as “pending” in our [previous May 2024 follow-up report](#) and eight new recommendations contained in the audit reports we published during 2024. In 2024, we tracked a total of 123 recommendations from 22 audit reports.¹ As of December 31, 2024, 17% of the recommendations (21 out of 123) were implemented, 60% (74 out of 123) remain pending, and 23% (28 out of 123) were closed (no further follow up planned). It should be noted that for audit reports published in 2024, it is typical for those reports’ recommendations to be pending as it requires time and effort by departments to implement our audit recommendations.

Recommendation Status as of December 31, 2024



Check out our interactive dashboard for updates on all our recommendations:

<https://www.seattle.gov/cityauditor/recommendations>

Status Categories

IMPLEMENTED: We determined that the recommendation or the intent of the recommendation has been met, or we see significant progress has been made and no barrier to its full implementation.

PENDING: We determined that implementation is in process or is uncertain, and additional monitoring is warranted. We will follow up on these recommendations in the future.

CLOSED: We decide to close recommendations when either:

1. The recommendation is no longer relevant;
2. Implementation is not feasible;
3. The audited entity’s management does not agree with the recommendation and is not planning to implement the recommendation; or
4. The recommendation was considered by the City Council but not adopted. We will no longer follow up on these recommendations.

¹ See Appendix A.

2024 Recommendation Follow-up Report Highlights



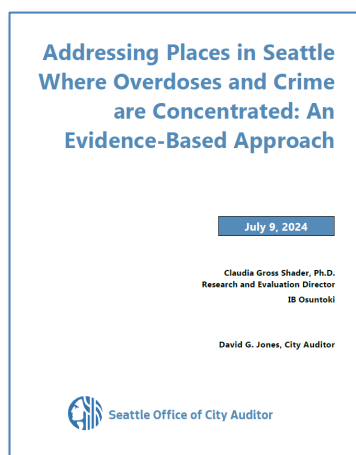
ITD Loss Reports Project Follow-up

The Seattle Information Technology Department (ITD) reported that it has implemented all eight recommendations from our [2020 memo on loss reports filed by ITD](#).



Seattle Municipal Court Probation

In 2024, the Seattle Municipal Court implemented the last of 14 recommendations from the City Council-requested September 2021 report [Assessment of Seattle Municipal Court Probation Racial and Ethnic Proportionality](#).



Overdoses and Crime

Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell and former City Council President Debora Juarez requested that our office prepare an audit that identified evidence-informed approaches for [addressing areas in Seattle where crime and overdose incidents are concentrated](#).

We recommended that the Mayor's Office designate a high-level project champion to oversee an evidence-based approach, work with other departments to use a proven coordination system, seek technical assistance from and collaborate with federal agencies, and regularly evaluate the City's efforts in addressing places where overdoses and crime are concentrated.

The Mayor's Office reported that in 2024 they implemented two of the report's eight recommendations by taking the following actions:

- The City has identified Seattle Restoration Director Leandra Craft as the lead for the Downtown Activation Team (DAT) and for the place-based problem-solving methodology to address places where overdoses and crime are concentrated.
- Working in conjunction with its Innovation and Performance team, the Mayor's Office led the implementation of the Overdose Mapping and Application Program (ODMAP) that provides City decision-makers with near real-time access to overdoses information.



Organized Retail Crime

In July 2023, our office conducted an [audit on retail theft in Seattle](#). We examined fencing operations related to organized retail crime, which involves organized efforts to steal and resell items, including sales through online marketplaces, unregulated markets, storefronts that buy stolen goods, and by the shipping of goods for sale outside of the U.S. We made ten recommendations for the City to improve its approach to addressing organized fencing operations. The Mayor's Office reported they have convened a team to work on these recommendations and have implemented four of the ten recommendations including:

- The Seattle Police Department (SPD) has assigned a lead detective, developed a workplan, and is participating in the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office [Vibrant Communities Initiative](#) pilot supported by the Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA).
- SPD is improving and simplifying the existing retail theft program with a more user-friendly reporting portal and website.
- Through their participation in the Vibrant Communities Initiative, SPD is learning about technology solutions to improve their current processes for addressing organized retail crime.
- The Mayor's Office reported that they and SPD worked with the City Attorney's Office and the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office to develop a one-page document for detectives on how to better file their cases with the appropriate information. They also created a one-page document for retailers in the retail theft program to ensure they are submitting enough information to help ensure a successful prosecution.

Oversight of the Seattle Police Department

In 2024, our office followed up on recommendations to the Seattle Police Department (SPD) from previous audits covering the topics of public disclosure requests, overtime, and special events.

- One recommendation from the City Council-requested [March 2015 report on SPD's public disclosure process](#) remains open because SPD has not yet developed a staffing model to estimate the optimal number of staff to handle its workload of public records requests. SPD reported that it is working to address this recommendation by:

- a) designing and implementing more rigorous records and data governance processes to streamline the search for records;
- b) exploring advancements in technology, particularly around the use of AI/machine learning to automate redaction and technologies that can scan multiple systems for keyword searches; and
- c) working with the Seattle Department of Human Resources to standardize the classification of public records officers and establishing position specifications that address workload expectations.

The implementation of this recommendation would help SPD determine how best to address the growing volume of public disclosure requests that it must process and the risks this poses to the City of Seattle.

- Seven recommendations remain open from our [April 2016 report on SPD's management of overtime](#) that was requested by then Police Chief Kathleen O'Toole. These recommendations are still open largely due to the need for a new software solution. SPD reported that, like the Seattle Fire Department, it is working to procure Telestaff/UKG, a software solution specifically designed for first responder agencies that has the functionality to provide the automatic controls and processes we recommended. SPD expects this system to be fully implemented in 2025.
- Ten recommendations remain open from our December 2017 report required by Ordinance 124860 on [SPD's staffing and cost recovery for work performed at special events held in Seattle](#), mainly because of the need for policy decisions that need to be made on cost recovery for special events and the need for the implementation of new software solutions.

Note that although performance audits of SPD are now under the jurisdiction of the Office of Inspector General (OIG), we plan to continue to follow up on the SPD recommendations made by our office.



Construction Permitting

In our October 2023 audit report [City's Construction Permitting Needs More Customer Focus and Consistency](#), we made 11 recommendations for the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) to improve permit timeliness tracking, use customer feedback to make process improvements, improve the permit prioritization process, and evaluate its internal ethical culture. We also recommended that the City act on permitting recommendations from past improvement efforts, re-evaluate department funding structures for permit staff, and develop a strategy for supporting permitting software. Finally, we recommended that SDCI develop a standard process for performing and evaluating permit corrections.

In 2024, SDCI reported that all recommendations remain pending with progress made towards publishing data on permitting metrics and timelines, coordination with other City departments, and working with the Information Technology Department on software solutions. SDCI also reported that it is in the process of conducting a Racial Equity Toolkit on the "future state of customer success (throughout the permitting process)." In addition, the City Budget Office reported that work was ongoing to set up the Permitting and Customer Service Team to serve as a single point of accountability in the City for governance of the permitting process.



Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance Program Audit

In December 2023, our office [published a report](#) about the decline in the number of rental properties registered under the Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance (RRIO) program. Given Seattle's complex rental housing market—which included decreasing RRIO registration renewals, housing affordability challenges, and an increase in large rental properties (with 21 or more units)—this audit provided insights and recommendations for improving the RRIO program. In 2024, the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections reported that it had implemented one of the nine recommendations by restarting in-person workshops for landlords throughout the year in coordination with other departments such as the Seattle Office for Civil Rights, and Seattle Public Utilities to connect landlords with the resources and information they need to comply with the RRIO program. The remaining eight recommendations are pending.



Bridge Maintenance

In our September 2020 report [Seattle Department of Transportation: Strategic Approach to Vehicle Bridge Maintenance is Warranted](#), we made ten recommendations to the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) aimed at improving the maintenance of vehicle bridges in Seattle. As of 2024, SDOT has implemented eight of these recommendations, and anticipates implementing the remaining two recommendations in 2025.



Audits of Surveillance Technology

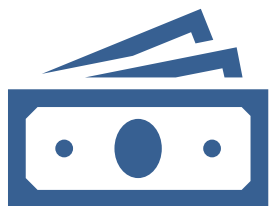
Ordinance 125376 requires the City Auditor to review the City's use of City Council-approved non-police surveillance technologies. In 2024, the City's Chief Technology Officer (CTO) reclassified the Seattle Fire Department's [computer-aided dispatch technology](#) and its [hazardous materials and emergency scene cameras](#) as non-surveillance technologies. The CTO also reclassified Seattle City Light's [current diversion technologies](#) as non-surveillance technologies. These three reports originally contained a total of 36 recommendations. Before the CTO's reclassification decision, Seattle City Light had implemented nine of the 11 recommendations. Due to the reclassification of technologies in 2024, we have closed all 26 remaining recommendations from these three reports.

As required by Ordinance 125376, in 2025 our office will review the Seattle Department of Transportation Closed Circuit Television Camera technology as this is the sole remaining non-police surveillance technology.



Encampments Dashboard

Subsequent to our July 2022 report, [The City of Seattle Should Use a Data Dashboard to Track its Progress Addressing Unsanctioned Encampments](#), the City launched its [One Seattle Homelessness Action Plan](#) website, which includes some of the metrics we proposed to help the City determine whether conditions related to unsanctioned encampments are getting better or worse. The Mayor's Office has updated the dashboard with data through December 2024. We consider this recommendation implemented.



Seattle City Employees' Retirement System

In our May 2019 report [City of Seattle Financial Condition 2017](#), we supported the Seattle City Employees' Retirement System's (SCERS) and the City's decision to maintain a stable employer contribution rate and continue to fund SCERS at or above the actuarially determined rate to help them achieve full funding by 2042.

In 2024, SCERS was funded at a contribution rate of 24.12%, the same as the actuarially required contribution rate for that year. For 2025, the City approved a contribution rate of 24%, which is the 2025 actuarially required rate. We consider this recommendation pending as the City will need to continue funding SCERS at or above the actuarially required contribution rate in subsequent years to fully fund the pension liability by 2042. We will consider this recommendation to be implemented when the pension liability is fully funded.

See Our Website for Detailed Recommendation Status Data

Information about the status of our recommendations is available on an [interactive dashboard](https://www.seattle.gov/cityauditor/recommendations), that allows users to review, sort, and further examine the results of our follow-up work. Below is an example image of the web page showing the dashboard (<https://www.seattle.gov/cityauditor/recommendations>).



Click the drop-down menu to select what data to show below.

STATUS KEY
 Open = All Pending Recommendations
 Closed = All Closed or Implemented Recommendations

Click on the different parts of these graphs to view data in the table at the bottom of the page.

APPENDIX A

Reports Included in the 2024 Annual Recommendation Follow-up Process

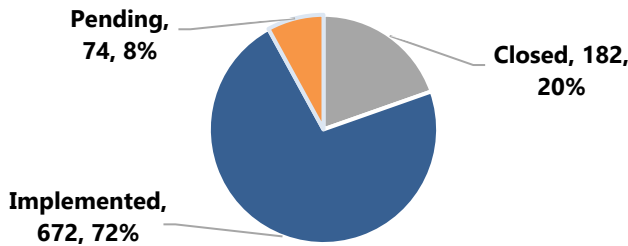
	Audit Title	Issue Date
1.	Addressing Places in Seattle Where Overdoses and Crime are Concentrated: An Evidence-Based Approach	7/9/2024
2.	Understanding Seattle’s Housing Market Shift from Small to Large Rental Properties: A Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance Program Audit	12/21/2023
3.	City’s Construction Permitting Needs More Customer Focus and Consistency	10/18/2023
4.	Workforce Equity in Promotions Audit	9/19/2023
5.	The City Can Do More to Tackle Organized Retail Crime in Seattle	7/21/2023
6.	Surveillance Technology Usage Review: Seattle City Light Current Diversion Technologies	10/31/2022
7.	Action is Needed to Explore Ways to Offer an Evidence-Based Treatment for People Who Use Methamphetamine	10/24/2022
8.	Surveillance Technology Usage Review: Seattle Fire Department Computer-Aided Dispatch	9/23/2022
9.	Surveillance Technology Usage Review: Seattle Fire Department Hazardous Materials and Emergency Scene Cameras	9/23/2022
10.	The City of Seattle Should Use a Data Dashboard to Track its Progress in Addressing Unsanctioned Encampments	7/15/2022
11.	Seattle Public Utilities Residential Solid Waste Billing Controls Audit	3/30/2022
12.	Seattle’s Sidewalk Maintenance and Repair Program	10/28/2021
13.	Assessment of Seattle Municipal Court Probation Racial and Ethnic Proportionality	9/23/2021
14.	Evaluation of Compliance with Ordinance 125873: Notice of Intent to Sell	9/21/2021
15.	Follow Up on Recent Loss Reports Filed by the Information Technology Department	12/11/2020
16.	Seattle Department of Transportation: Strategic Approach to Vehicle Bridge Maintenance is Warranted	9/14/2020
17.	Seattle Minimum Wage Enforcement Audit	12/16/2019
18.	City of Seattle Financial Condition 2017	5/13/2019
19.	Seattle Public Utilities Wholesale Water Sales	3/15/2018
20.	Special Events – Police Staffing and Cost Recovery	12/13/2017
21.	Seattle Police Department Overtime Controls Audit	4/11/2016
22.	Audit of the Seattle Police Department’s Public Disclosure Process	3/18/2015

APPENDIX B

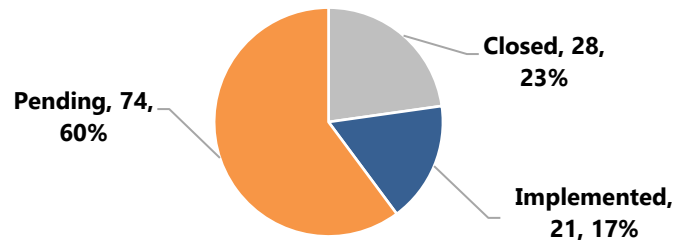
How Does the Office of City Auditor Follow Up on Recommendations?

After we complete an audit report, we will add the report’s recommendations to our tracking database. Our office verifies the status of recommendations by following up with the appropriate City departments. Overall, we have tracked 928 recommendations contained in 87 audit reports since January 2007. The pie chart on the left below represents the cumulative follow-up progress from January 2007 through December 2024, and the pie chart on the right represents our follow-up progress during 2024. As of December 31, 2024, 72% (672 out of 928) of our recommendations were implemented, 8% (74 out of 928) remain pending, and 20% (182 out of 928) were closed (categorized as no further follow-up planned).

All Recommendations 2007-2024



Recommendation Status as of December 31, 2024



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APPENDIX C

Seattle Office of City Auditor Mission, Background, and Quality Assurance

Our Mission:

We conduct independent analyses of City programs and services with an equity and social justice perspective, making recommendations on ways the City can better serve the people of Seattle.

Background:

Seattle voters established our office by a 1991 amendment to the City Charter. The office is an independent department within the legislative branch of City government. The City Auditor reports to the City Council and has a four-year term to ensure their independence in deciding what work the office should perform and reporting the results of this work. The Office of City Auditor conducts performance audits and non-audit projects covering City of Seattle programs, departments, grants, and contracts. The City Auditor's goal is to ensure that the City of Seattle is run as effectively, efficiently, and equitably as possible in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

How We Ensure Quality:

The office's work is performed in accordance with the Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. These standards provide guidelines for audit planning, fieldwork, quality control systems, staff training, and reporting of results. In addition, the standards require that external auditors periodically review our office's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that we adhere to these professional standards.

Seattle Office of City Auditor

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