

Taking Action to Improve the User Experience of Park Restrooms

Parks, Public Utilities, & Technology Committee | February 26, 2025



Seattle
Parks & Recreation

Healthy People, **Thriving Environment**, **Vibrant Community**

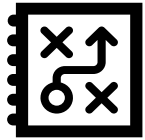
#SeattleShines

A graphic consisting of four horizontal bars in yellow, red, green, and blue, stacked vertically.

Overview



Restrooms are regularly cited in **public feedback** as an area for improvement.



SPR's 2020 **Strategic Plan** recognized the public demand for improved restroom cleanliness and year-round access, and this informed **Park District Cycle 2 investments** (*capital renovation, weatherization, and increased maintenance*).



We welcomed the opportunity to get the Auditor's perspective on **how to improve restrooms for park users** and partnered closely throughout the audit.



Overview



SPR generally concurs with the audit findings and we are jumping into implementing improvements, as outlined in our full response.

Today's Agenda



Providing Public Restrooms in Seattle: Context & Challenges



Restroom Renovation



Daily Cleaning



Preventive Maintenance



Measuring Success



(items directly responsive to audit findings)



Providing Public Restrooms in Seattle: Context & Challenges



Context: Restrooms in Seattle's Parks



129 restrooms in parks, either standalone or attached to shelter houses.



Many close seasonally (November through April) mainly due to potential for frozen pipes. Though SPR is in process of weatherizing all restrooms for year-round use.



Many park restrooms are **aging facilities**, with capital projects needed to improve the user experience.



Facility design has varied over time based on public preferences (for example, all gender restrooms) and innovations for maintenance and safety (for example, the Portland Loo).



Challenges: Citywide Crises Impact Park Restrooms



SPR's system of restrooms was designed to meet the needs of *general park users* – though we work hard to provide access to all.



Due to a **citywide shortage of public restrooms**, our restrooms see significant use beyond park users (people experiencing homelessness, bus and delivery drivers, and more).



Park restrooms are greatly impacted by the **citywide mental health and drug abuse crises**, with restrooms closures due to unprecedented levels of **vandalism and arson**, diverting significant amounts of staff time and resources.

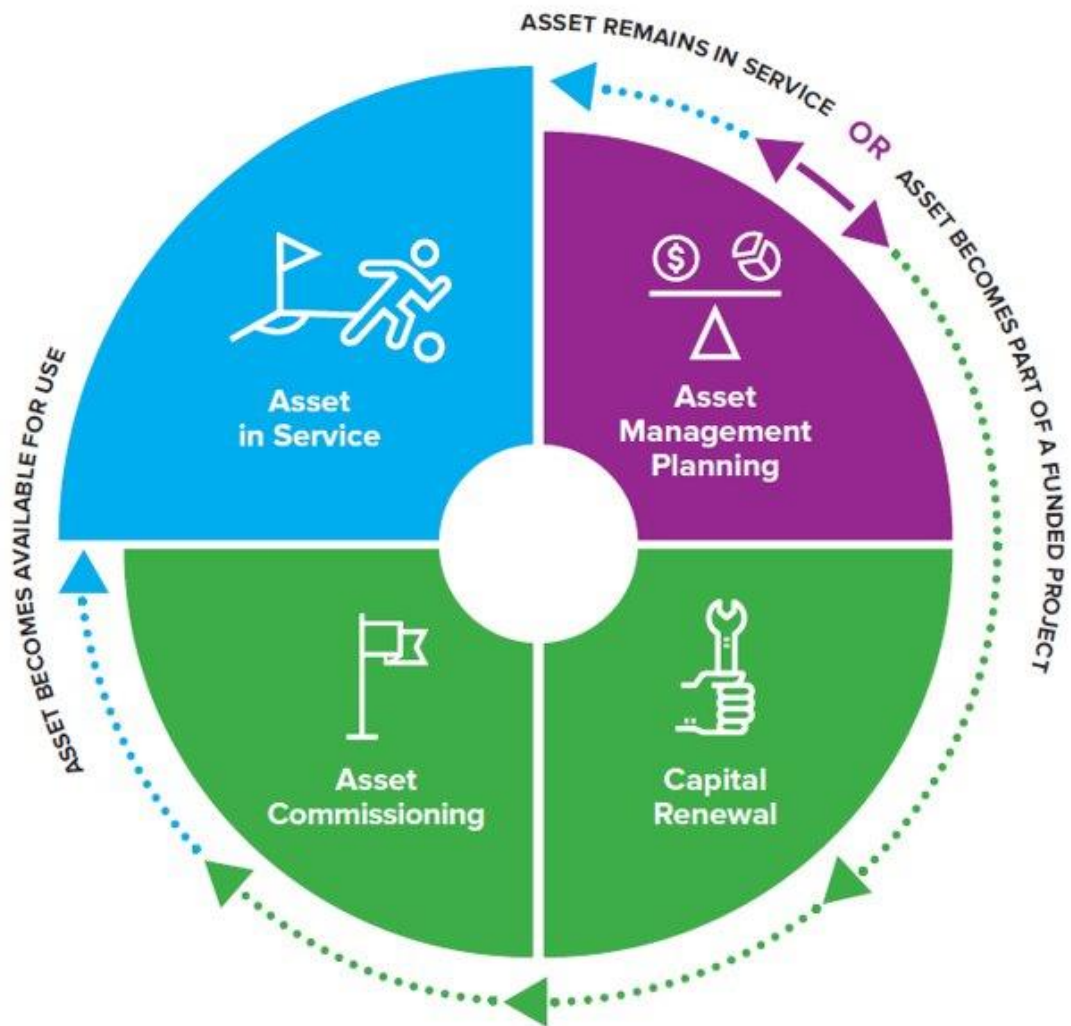




Restroom Renovation

*Providing much-needed **renovation of aging restrooms** to improve the user experience.*

Restroom Renovation



Cycle 2 (2023-2028) Investment:



RESTROOM RENOVATIONS

5 restrooms renovated toward goal of 27 with 3 in construction

19%



Newly renovated single-stall restrooms at Gas Works Park in 2024

Restroom Renovation: Investments & Innovations

Efficient Project Bidding:



- Bundling multiple restrooms into single bid packages:
 - ✓ 2024 Package – 5 sites: *Gilman, Salmon Bay, Sandel, Seward, Lakewood*
 - ✓ 2025 Package – 3 sites
- Bundling restroom renovations with other site improvements:
 - ✓ Examples: *Pathways Park, Little Brook Park, Carkeek Park, View Ridge Playfield, Garfield Super Block*

Other Actions Responsive to the Audit:



Align **condition assessments** with 6-year Park District planning processes.



Formally **update design standards** to incorporate lessons learned around vandalism, durability, and maintenance.



Preventive Maintenance

*Keeping restrooms in **good working order**
to improve the user experience.*

Preventive Maintenance: PM 101



- Preventive maintenance (PM) is **proactive, routine maintenance on assets to keep them in good working order**, with a goal of avoiding unexpected failure and costly, unplanned downtime.
- Regular restroom PM includes:
 - Replace integral plumbing components
 - Inspect for leaks and other damage
 - Verify integrity of freeze protection
 - Evaluate interior and exterior lighting function and other electrical assets

Preventive Maintenance: Investments & Actions

Cycle 2 Investment:

Bolster support for scheduled preventative maintenance and regulatory compliance work by adding positions in skilled trades.

Current Status:

- Preventive maintenance falling below aspirational goal 60% / 40% due to increased demand work (especially related to vandalism).
- Currently prioritizing hiring additional plumbers and electricians in early 2025 – optimistic after the City adopted 2024 AWI and a wage adjustment.

Other Actions Responsive to the Audit:

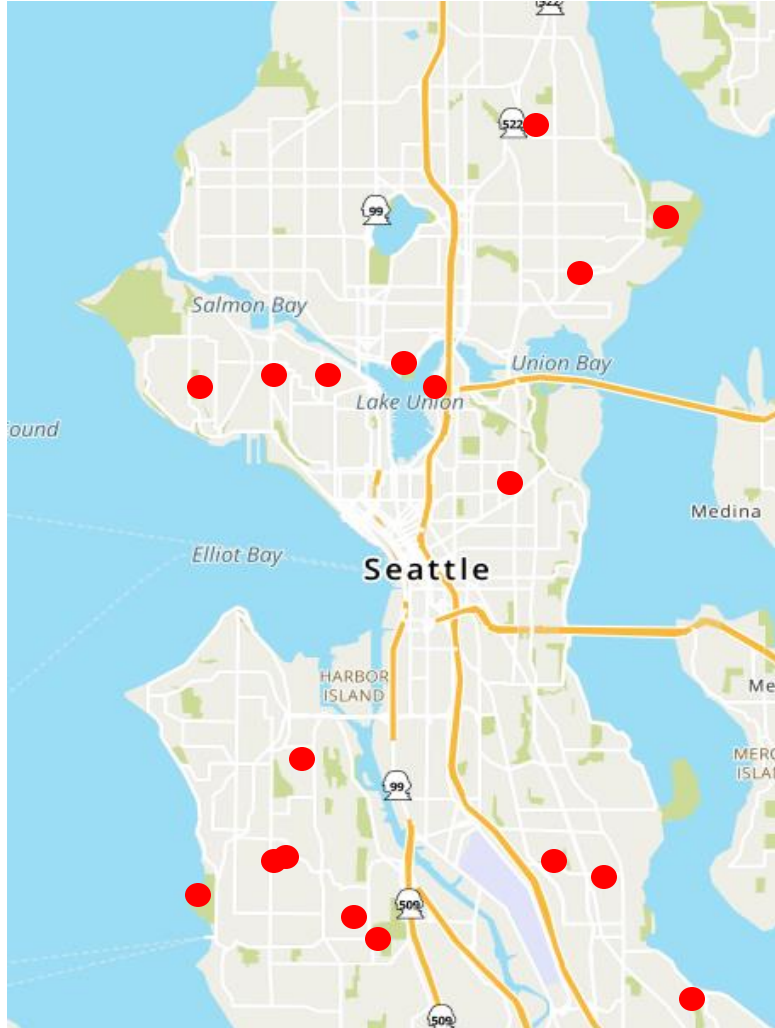


Develop clear **operations & maintenance (O&M) standards** for annual restroom preventative maintenance in 2025.



Refine annual **performance goal** related to meeting these O&M standards by year-end 2025.

Preventive Maintenance: Weatherization



Cycle 2 Investment:

Increase year-round access to restrooms by weatherize ~60 restrooms by end of 2028.



Current Status:

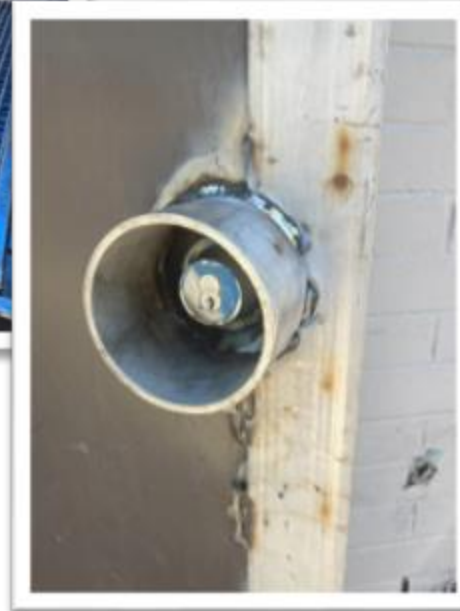
- **18 sites** weatherized for year-round operation in 2023 and 2024
- On track for completion in 2028, with some lessons learned along the way



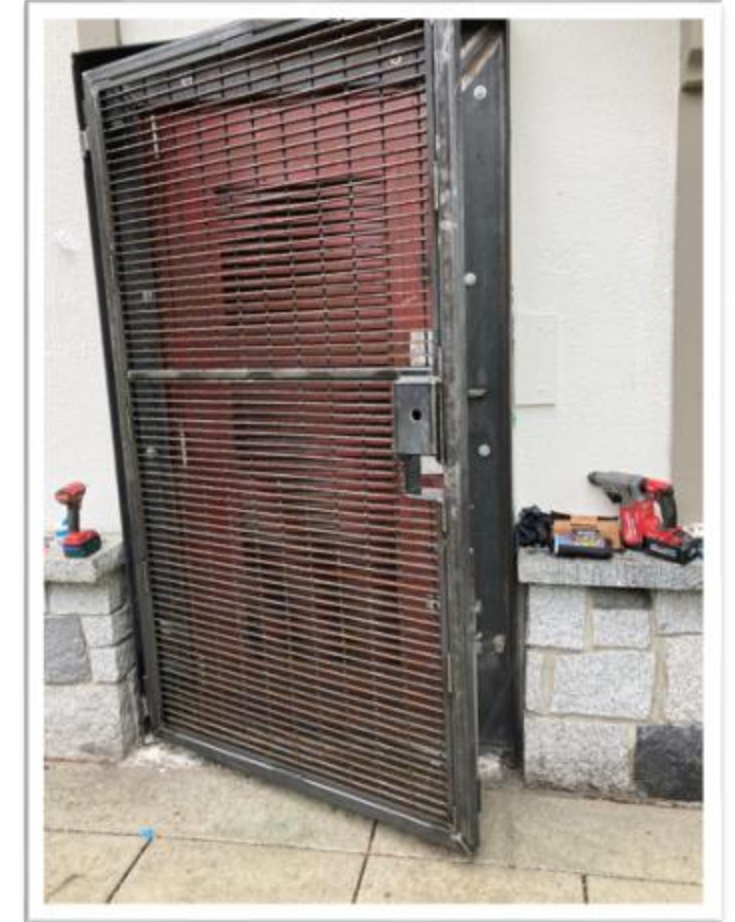
Preventive Maintenance: Lessons & Innovations



*Lakeridge Playground
Restroom Weatherization*



*SPR's metal fabricators design and create
new hardware to mitigate vandalism*



*New door gate / lock cover installed
at Cal Anderson*



Daily Cleaning

*Consistent and effective **regular maintenance of restrooms** to improve the user experience.*



Daily Cleaning: Restroom Maintenance 101




Our Approach to Restroom Cleaning:

- Restroom Routes and Park Maintenance Routes.
- Specific treatment varies based on materials, age, and conditions – but sanitization is a consistent feature.
- Laborers also keep an eye on overall park conditions and safety, call in work orders as necessary, and engage with the public throughout the day.

Cycle 2 Investment:

*Add 2 teams to **increase evening, weekend, and non-peak season maintenance.***

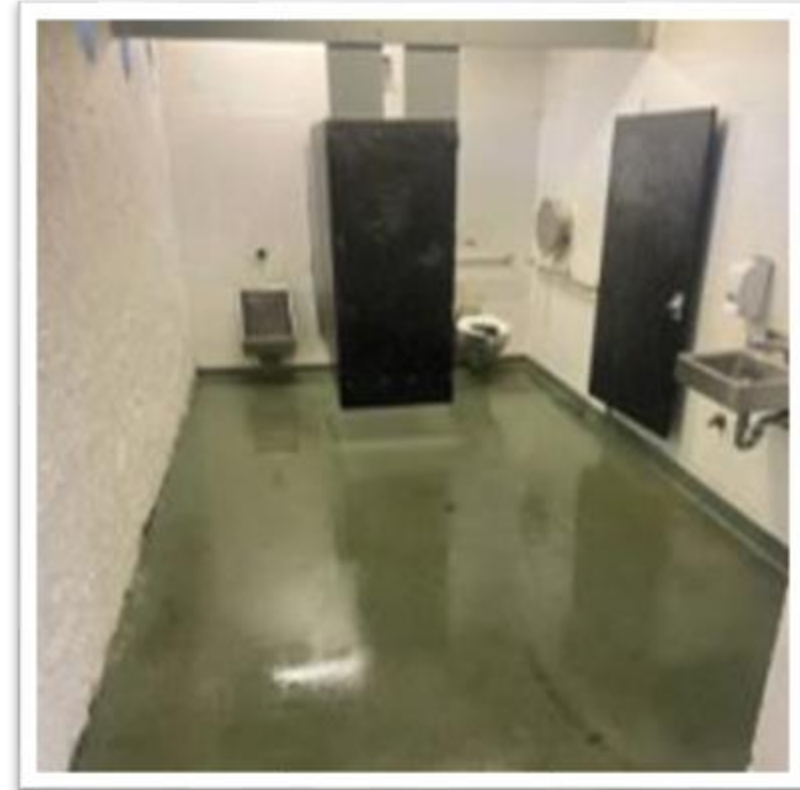
Current Status:

- 2 teams launched in Q2 2023, but 2024 financial issues reduced resources available systemwide.
-  Prioritizing the hiring of laborers in early 2025 – positions posted in January

Daily Cleaning: Investments & Innovations

New technology means cleaner restrooms:

- Hot pressure washing will increase cleaning quality and consistency
- Expected in all maintenance districts once trucks arrive (expected by summer)



Don Armeni Restroom after a deep clean with a hot pressure washer

Daily Cleaning: Investments & Innovations



Other Actions Response to the Audit:



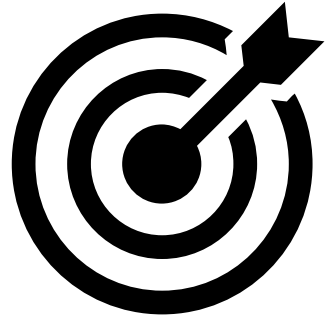
Develop **by-restroom cleaning expectations** by Q3 2025.



Revamp **cleaning standards** and establish **annual training** by Q3 2025.



Develop written guidelines for **prioritizing restroom locking** by Q3 2025.



Measuring Success



Verifying Success: Park Inspection Background



Seattle

Find It, Fix It

The primary gauge of our success is **public satisfaction with our services**. We take public feedback in a variety of formal and informal ways—a biennial survey, Find It Fix It, social media, our maintenance request line, and through the ***Park Inspection Program***.

Park Inspection Program:

- Since 2017, SPR has engaged cohorts of trained volunteers to inspect parks.
- Provides park- and asset-specific data on how we're performing against our maintenance standards, on a 1-5 scale.
- Used internally and publicly reported on our dashboard and in the annual report.




Trained volunteers conducting a park inspection

Verifying Success: Park Inspection

PLAY AREAS

MAINTENANCE GOALS
Safe, free of glass, litter, graffiti and debris, weed free, level surface, adequate volumes of surface material, surface material contained, clean wading pools and spray features.



RATING: 5
CONDITION: EXCELLENT
REASON:
Meets all goals.



RATING: 3
CONDITION: NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
REASON:
Not level, inadequate material and trip hazard.



RATING: 1
CONDITION: UNACCEPTABLE
REASON:
Sand not level, debris present, weeds in play area.

RESTROOMS

MAINTENANCE GOALS
Clean fixtures, soap and paper supplies available, clean floors, walls and ceilings, litter free and odor free. Entrance and areas immediately around the restrooms are clean and graffiti free.



RATING: 5
CONDITION: EXCELLENT
REASON:
Clean surfaces and fixtures, well supplied, no litter.



RATING: 3
CONDITION: NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
REASON:
Litter, dirty wall, stained floor



RATING: 1
CONDITION: UNACCEPTABLE
REASON:
Dirty walls, littered, no toilet paper.

✕ Park Inspection Program

Park Name *
WESTBRIDGE SHOPS

I am inspecting a... *
Restroom

Restroom Goals Met:

- Floor is free of trip & slip hazards.
- Fixtures function properly.
- Soap and paper supplies available.
- Clean fixtures, floors, walls and ceiling.
- Odor, litter, and graffiti free.

This Restroom Report:

★★★★★

Restroom Comments (Optional):

Take a Picture (Optional)

Maintenance standards (left) and the app-based Park Inspection rating system (right)

Verifying Success: Investments & Innovations



Supervisors assessing playground conditions

Other Actions Responsive to the Audit:



✓ Refine and pilot a **restroom-specific goal** from Park Inspection Program data by end of 2025.



✓ Incorporate **supervisory monitoring** into program by Q3 2025.

Thank You & Learn More



SPR's [public restrooms dashboard](#)



Current [capital projects](#)
(including many
restrooms)



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