SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

Governance, Accountability, and Economic Development Committee

Agenda

Thursday, August 14, 2025

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, City Hall
600 4th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Sara Nelson, Chair
Robert Kettle, Vice-Chair
Joy Hollingsworth, Member
Maritza Rivera, Member
Mark Solomon, Member

Chair Info: 206-684-8809; Sara.Nelson@seattle.gov

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Meeting Location:
Council Chamber, City Hall , 600 4th Avenue , Seattle, WA 98104

Committee Website:
seattle.gov/council/committees/governance-accountability-and-economic-development

This meeting also constitutes a meeting of the City Council, provided that the meeting shall be conducted as a committee meeting under the Council Rules and Procedures, and Council action shall be limited to committee business. Pursuant to Council Rule VI.C.10, members of the public providing public comment in Chambers will be broadcast via Seattle Channel.

Members of the public may register for remote or in-person Public Comment to address the Council. Speakers must be registered in order to be recognized by the Chair. Details on how to register for Public Comment are listed below:

Remote Public Comment - Register online to speak during the Public Comment period at the meeting at https://www.seattle.gov/council/committees/public-comment. Online registration to speak will begin one hour before the meeting start time, and registration will end at the conclusion of the Public Comment period during the meeting.

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Please submit written comments no later than four business hours prior to the start of the meeting to ensure that they are distributed to Councilmembers prior to the meeting. Comments may be submitted at Council@seattle.gov or at Seattle City Hall, Attn: Council Public Comment, 600 4th Ave., Floor 2, Seattle, WA 98104. Business hours are considered 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Comments received after that time will be distributed after the meeting to Councilmembers and included as part of the public record.

Please Note: Times listed are estimated

A. Call To Order

B. Approval of the Agenda

C. Public Comment

D. Items of Business

1. **Gun Violence, Overdoses and Crime, and Organized Retail Crime Audit Recommendations Follow-Up**

Supporting Documents:

Four Recommendations to Better Understand and Address Current Gun Violence Patterns in Seattle

Addressing Places in Seattle Where Overdoses and Crime are Concentrated

The City Can Do More to Tackle Organized Retail Crime in Seattle

2024 Status Report

2024 Status Report Presentation

Auditor Presentation

Briefing and Discussion

Presenters: Shon Barnes, Chief, and Brian Maxey, Seattle Police Department; Tanya Kim, Director, and Ann Gorman, Human Services Department; Harold Scoggins, Chief, and Jon Ehrenfeld, Seattle Fire Department; Andrew Myerberg and Sarah Smith, Mayor's Office; David Jones, City Auditor, and Claudia Gross-Shader, Office of City Auditor

2.   CB 121060   **AN ORDINANCE relating to the West Seattle Junction Parking and Business Improvement Area; modifying the exemptions to the Levy of Special Assessment; and amending Ordinance 113326, as previously amended by Ordinances 115997, 119539, 120570, 121758, 125152, and 127103.**

Supporting Documents:

Summary and Fiscal Note

OED Presentation

West Seattle Junction Association Presentation

Briefing and Discussion

Presenters: Casey Rogers and Alicia Teel, Office of Economic Development (OED); Chris Mackay, Executive Director, West Seattle Junction Association

E. Adjournment

File #: Inf 2723, **Version:** 1

Gun Violence, Overdoses and Crime, and Organized Retail Crime Audit Recommendations Follow-Up

Four Recommendations to Better Understand and Address Current Gun Violence Patterns in Seattle

March 25, 2025

Claudia Gross Shader, PhD, Research and Evaluation Director

Andrew Scoggin, Assistant City Auditor

David G. Jones, City Auditor

Seattle Office of City Auditor

Four Recommendations to Better Understand and Address Current Gun Violence Patterns in Seattle

Report Highlights

Background

Gun violence in Seattle has increased significantly in the past decade, including a sustained post-pandemic increase in shootings. Between 2020 and 2024, shots fired increased 71 percent; non-fatal shootings increased 58 percent; and fatal shootings increased 23 percent. Therefore, learning more about the current patterns in gun violence in Seattle can help the City of Seattle (City) and the Seattle City Council understand whether City-funded interventions are aligned with our gun violence problems.

What We Found

We found that the City does not currently have a mechanism for systematic reporting on gun violence patterns to City departments, elected officials, and community stakeholders, and the City does not currently have access to other data and analyses (e.g., public health data) that could be helpful for understanding more about gun violence. The City does not routinely engage in the types of problem analyses that lay the foundation for directed, effective strategies, nor does it routinely or systematically engage other City departments, other government entities, and community partners in an "all-hands-on-deck" approach to addressing gun violence.

Recommendations

Our audit describes two approaches for potentially improving the City's approach to addressing gun violence: 1.) Use a systematic framework for reporting gun violence patterns, and 2.) Use problem analysis and an "all-hands-on-deck" approach to address gun violence. Our report offers four related recommendations as well as an item for City Council consideration related to Seattle Police Department (SPD) investigations.

Mayor's Office Response

The Mayor's Office generally concurred with the audit recommendations (see Appendix A).

WHY WE DID THIS AUDIT

This audit regarding current patterns of gun violence in Seattle grew out of a request by Mayor Bruce Harrell and Seattle City Council President Sara Nelson. We hope this audit will serve as a first step to helping the City ensure that its efforts to address gun violence are effective.

HOW WE DID THIS AUDIT

The scope of the audit was focused on recent patterns in gun violence. To conduct this audit, we interviewed officials from City departments, federal agencies, and other jurisdictions. We reviewed research and gathered evidence on best practices, and we received free technical assistance on this audit from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs Violent Crime Reduction Roadmap program provided by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF).

Seattle Office of City Auditor
David G. Jones, City Auditor
www.seattle.gov/cityauditor

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INTRODUCTION

Audit Overview

This audit regarding current patterns of gun violence in Seattle grew out of a request by Mayor Bruce Harrell and Seattle City Council President Sara Nelson.[1] Gun violence in Seattle has increased significantly in the past decade. Therefore, learning more about the current gun violence patterns in Seattle can help the City of Seattle (City) and City Council understand whether City-funded interventions are aligned with our gun violence problems. We hope this audit will serve **as a first step** to helping the City ensure that its efforts to address gun violence are effective. See Exhibit 1 for a potential five-step framework the City could use to ensure its efforts to reduce gun violence are effective.

Our audit describes two ways for potentially improving the City's approach to addressing gun violence: 1.) Use a systematic framework for reporting gun violence patterns, and 2.) Use problem analysis and an "all-hands-on-deck" approach to address gun violence. Our report offers four related recommendations as well as an item for City Council consideration related to Seattle Police Department (SPD) investigations.

We received free technical assistance on this audit from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs Violent Crime Reduction Roadmap program provided by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF). We would especially like to acknowledge Dr. Lexi Gill of the University of South Florida for her work on this audit on behalf of PERF.

The Mayor's Office, SPD, the Human Services Department, the Community Assisted Response and Engagement (CARE) Department, and the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office reviewed and provided input on this report. The Mayor's Office responses to the report are included in Appendix A.

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[1] This audit request grew out of a January 8, 2024 audit request from Mayor Bruce Harrell and Seattle City Council President Sara Nelson that asked our office to update our 2012 assessment of crime prevention programs funded by the City, including programs operated by the City and those run by community-based nonprofit organizations. Like the 2012 assessment, the Mayor and Council President asked our office to identify the evidence-based programs, those with no evidence of effectiveness, those that may be promising, and those that may cause harm. In April 2024, the Mayor's Office requested that our crime prevention audit be put on hold "because HSD [the Human Services Department] is preparing to issue a new round of RFPs [requests for proposals] that will result in new funding opportunities." The Mayor's Office felt that "assessing these programs in the context of the RFP responses seems more prudent." On July 24, 2024, at the request of Seattle City Council President Sara Nelson, our office initiated this audit on the nature of the current gun violence problem in Seattle. On October 7, 2024 Seattle City Council President Sara Nelson requested that original audit of crime prevention programs be restarted.

Exhibit 1: Five steps the City could take to ensure its gun violence investments are effective
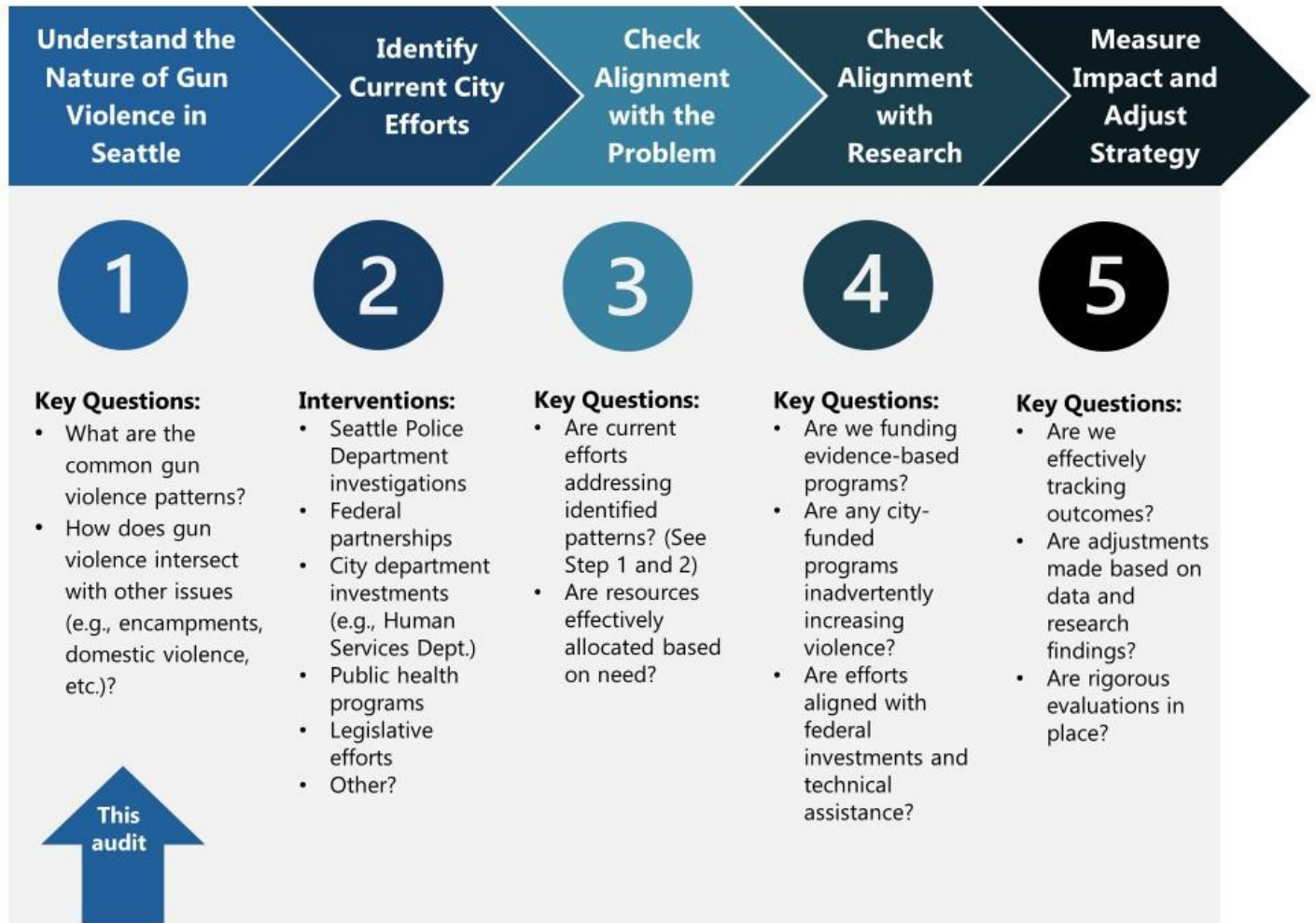
Source: Office of City Auditor

Gun Violence in Seattle

Gun violence in Seattle has risen significantly in the last decade, as shown in Exhibit 2 below. According to SPD data, shots fired incidents rose 194 percent between 2013 and 2024 (184 to 541). In that same timeframe, shootings with non-fatal injuries were up 150 percent (60 to 150) and fatal shootings were up 220 percent (10 to 32). Between 2023 and 2024, fatal shootings fell 26 percent (43 to 32) and non-fatal-injury shootings fell 6 percent (160 to 150), while shots fired incidents were up 3 percent (528 to 541).

Exhibit 2 below provides a visual representation of the sustained post-pandemic increase in shootings. Between 2020 and 2024, shots fired increased 71 percent; non-fatal shootings increased 58 percent; and fatal shootings increased 23 percent.

Exhibit 2: Shootings in Seattle have risen significantly over the last decade
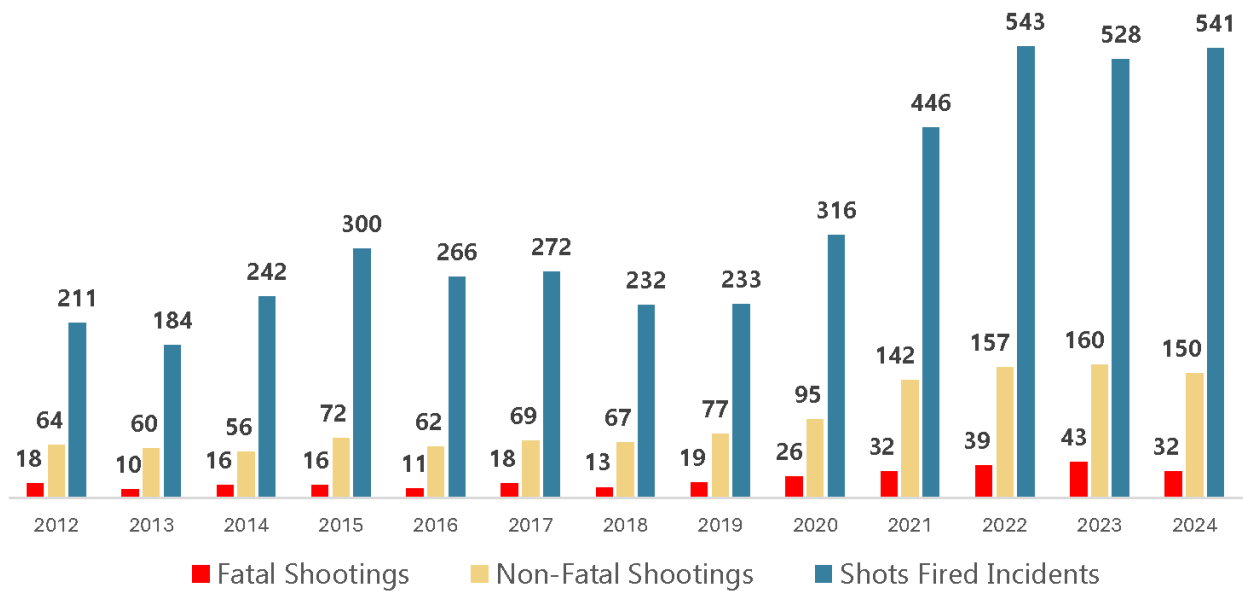
Source: Seattle Police Department Public Crime Dashboard (Note: Counts reflect the number of gun violence incidents as reported to police, not the number of victims.)

In July 2024 and in January 2025, the Seattle Times reported on the increase of fatal shootings among youth in King County, including Seattle. According to King County data, there were 56 gunshot wound victims (fatal and non-fatal) under the age of 18 in Seattle from 2021 through July 2024.[2]

Seattle has experienced a disproportionate amount of gun violence in the region. In 2023, the gun violence rate was 1.25 per 1,000 individuals in Seattle, compared with 1.01 per 1,000 individuals in King County.[3]

Gun homicides are also up nationally in recent years, although at lower rates than in Seattle. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, gun homicides in the U.S. rose 60 percent from 2013 to 2023, including a 35 percent spike between 2019 and 2020. The number of such deaths has fallen nationally recently, decreasing 6 percent from 2021 to 2022 and 9 percent from 2022 to 2023. In addition, several of the jurisdictions highlighted in this report,

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[2] See this 2024 landscape analysis of gun violence in Seattle prepared by the Police Executive Research Forum and the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office.

[3] See source in footnote 2 above.

including Baltimore and Indianapolis, have seen reductions in gun violence since 2021 when they began implementing comprehensive evidence-based strategies to address gun violence.

Gun offenses are unevenly distributed in Seattle, with 33.2 percent (1,012) of gun offenses between 2021 and 2023 in City Council District 2, encompassing southeast Seattle (see Exhibit 3 below).

Exhibit 3: Gun offenses from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023, by City Council District
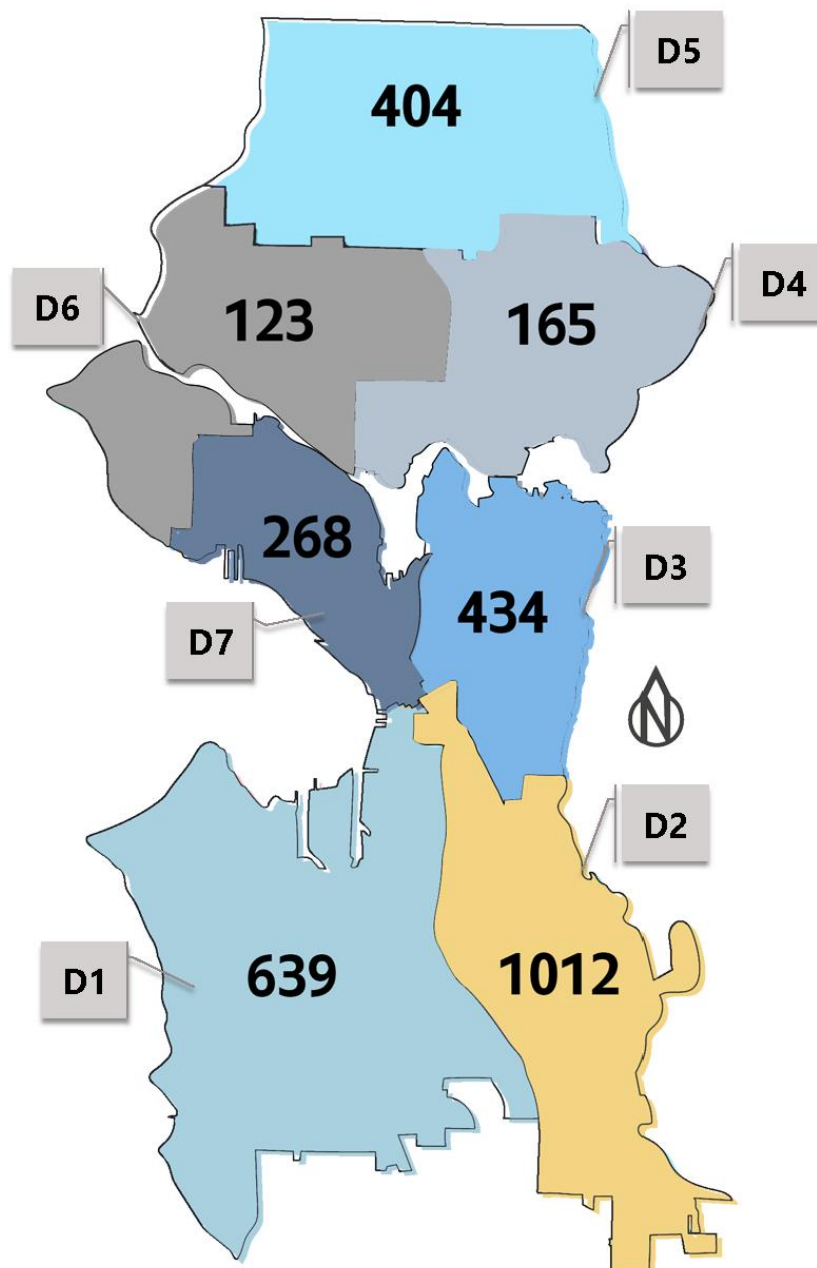
Data Source: King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office
Image Source: Office of City Auditor

U.S. Department of Justice Violent Crime Reduction

For this audit, we requested and received free technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (OJP), which, in December 2023, launched the Violent Crime Reduction Roadmap (see Exhibit 4) as "a one-stop-shop to assist local jurisdictions in developing, implementing, and evaluating the right set of strategies to prevent, intervene in, and respond to acts of community gun violence."

Exhibit 4: U.S. Department of Justice Violent Crime Reduction Roadmap

Action 1
SET A CLEAR GOAL: COMMIT TO SAVING LIVES BY STOPPING VIOLENCE

Action 2
IDENTIFY THE KEY PEOPLE AND PLACES DRIVING THE VIOLENCE

Action 3
CREATE A CITYWIDE PLAN FOR ENGAGING KEY PEOPLE AND PLACES

Action 4
ENGAGE KEY PEOPLE WITH EMPATHY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Action 5
ADDRESS KEY LOCATIONS USING PLACE-BASED POLICING AND INVESTMENT

Action 6
PLACE RESPONSIBILITY FOR VIOLENCE REDUCTION EFFORTS AT THE TOP

Action 7
EMPHASIZE HEALING WITH TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES

Action 8
INVEST IN ANTI-VIOLENCE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Action 9
SET ASIDE FUNDING FOR NEW STAKEHOLDERS AND STRATEGIES

Action 10
COMMIT TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT BASED ON DATA, EVIDENCE, AND PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING

Source: U.S. Department of Justice

OJP offers free technical assistance for communities on how to use the Roadmap strategies; this technical assistance is provided by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF). Their Roadmap is organized around 10 essential actions (pictured in Exhibit 4) to reduce community gun violence identified by the nonprofit Council on Criminal Justice.

Before our audit, the City had not been following the Violent Crime Reduction Roadmap nor using free technical assistance from OJP and PERF. Through our technical assistance from PERF, we worked to identify leading practices from other jurisdictions for tracking patterns in gun violence. This included leading practices in communicating gun violence patterns to City leaders who can track outcomes of existing programs and who can direct City resources, including non-police resources,[4] toward gun violence prevention efforts.

Actionable Steps for the City

We also worked to identify any potential actionable steps for the City based on current patterns in gun violence. For example, early on in our audit, we determined that the Seattle Police Department (SPD), the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office (KCPAO), and Seattle Parks and Recreation each track data on gun violence in Seattle parks. There is agreement from these departments that a subset of Seattle parks experience high concentrations of gun violence. This data could be helpful for City officials for directing limited resources to physical improvements that could deter gun violence, such as improved access control (e.g., gates) and improved lighting. However, these data as they are currently collected vary in terms of types of gun violence, reporting period, and park names/locations. Therefore, as part of our audit, we worked with SPD, KCPAO, and Parks to develop a consensus dataset for concentrations of gun violence in Seattle parks that could be useful for prioritizing safety improvements (see this link for the custom report created by SPD for this audit, part of which appears in Exhibit 7 later in this report).

Our office has also conducted other audits on City efforts related to violent crime—see Appendix C for more information, including the status of recommendations from those audits.

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[4] For example, our July 9, 2024 audit on places in Seattle where overdoses and crimes are concentrated described four types of evidence-based strategies for place-based crime prevention: 1. increase guardianship, 2. change the physical environment, 3. change/enforce rules and policies, and 4. build capacity for community problem-solving.

USE A SYSTEMATIC FRAMEWORK FOR REPORTING GUN VIOLENCE PATTERNS

Section Summary

Currently, the Seattle Police Department (SPD) tracks and analyzes multiple gun violence patterns to support its investigations, and SPD provides additional reports on gun violence patterns based on requests. SPD has the capacity to perform sophisticated diagnostic and geospatial analyses related to gun violence in Seattle (see Exhibit 4 for examples). However, the City does not currently have a mechanism for systematic reporting on gun violence patterns (including public health data) to other City departments, elected officials, and community stakeholders. Narrow and irregular reporting on gun violence can impede opportunities for improved problem-solving and greater accountability. Further, the City does not currently have access to other data and analyses (e.g., public health data) that could be helpful for understanding more about gun violence.

The City should look to examples from other jurisdictions to become more systematic in its reporting on gun violence patterns. In addition, the City could continue to receive ongoing technical assistance from U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (OJP) and the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) to build its reporting on gun violence patterns. We recommend that the City develop systematic reporting on gun violence patterns to City departments, elected officials, community stakeholders, and the public. We also recommend that the Mayor's Office provide an update to the City Council on the violence intervention initiative within the City's Community Assisted Response and Engagement (CARE) Department.

The City has the capacity to report on gun violence patterns, but that information is not shared widely or systematically

Existing Data on Gun Violence Patterns

We worked to identify data the City already collects that can help identify patterns in gun violence to inform City programs and policies. Since the scope of the audit was focused on recent patterns in gun violence (i.e., not all crime nor all violent crime, just gun violence), we explored whether City data can identify the following gun violence patterns:

- Are there common patterns in gun violence in Seattle? (e.g., is there a nexus with gangs/groups, encampments, prostitution, domestic violence, drug distribution and use, etc.)

- Are there common patterns among shooting incidents in Seattle? (e.g., proximity to parks or nightclubs, time of day, differences between youth and adults, etc.)

- Are there common patterns among gun violence victims? (e.g., known to the shooter, youth in a group, bystander, etc.)

The Seattle Police Department's (SPD) public Crime Dashboard includes historical counts of fatal and non-fatal shootings and shots fired incidents that can be viewed geographically. In addition, existing data sources that we identified during our audit along with descriptions and links to datasets (if available) are included in Exhibit 5 below. SPD has two groups that identify patterns on gun violence. SPD's Investigations Bureau reports on all shots fired incidents and uses data from SPD's records management system and detailed reviews of the case files to identify gun violence patterns including many of those listed above (e.g., nexus with domestic violence).

SPD's Performance Analytics and Research section also provides reports on shootings and shots fired that are shared at SeaStat,[5] an information-sharing forum for SPD and prosecutors that is based on the principles of Compstat. SPD's Performance Analytics and Research section also produces ad hoc reports related to gun violence such as the example in Exhibit 5 below. County-wide quarterly firearm violence reports produced by the King County Prosecuting Attorney (KCPAO) Crime Strategies Unit are made publicly available on their website.

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[5] Although SPD's Performance Analytics and Research section shares reports on shootings and shots fired at SeaStat meetings, these are not publicly available. The SeaStat web page contains meeting slides from 2014-2020 only.

Exhibit 5: Existing data on gun violence patterns in Seattle

Data Source Agency/ Organization	Description of Data Collected	How is the Data Used Currently	Links to Data Sample
SPD Investigations and Criminal Intelligence Unit	Shots fired incident data (fatal injury, non-fatal injury, eyewitness, casings, or property damage); data from detailed review of case files.	Data is used within SPD to identify patterns (e.g., robbery nexus, homelessness nexus, domestic violence nexus). Pattern analyses are shared with SPD investigators, other local law enforcement, and prosecutors.	Seattle Shots Fired Trends by Category (2021- July 2024)
SPD Performance Analytics and Research	Shootings (fatal and non-fatal) and shots fired by precinct and micro-community policing plan area; shooting victim demographics.	Data is shared during monthly SeaStat meetings for SPD command staff and prosecutors.	Year to Date Shooting and Shots Fired (January 1 – July 18, 2024)
SPD Performance Analytics and Research	Ad hoc analyses based on requests from SPD command staff, other City departments, and external organizations.	(Use varies by requestor.)	Report on Firearm Violations and Shots Fired on City Parks and/or Community Centers 2019-2024 (*requested by City Budget Office/ Innovation and Performance*)
King County Prosecuting Attorney (KCPAO) Crime Strategies Unit	Works with all 39 law enforcement agencies in King County to develop quarterly firearm violence reports. Reports include geographic distribution, historical comparisons, and victim demographics.	Data is made publicly available each quarter. Data is also used to inform and assess KCPAO's prevention programs.	King County Quarterly Firearm Violence Reports: Q1 2024 Q2 2024 Q3 2024 2024 Year End Report

Source: Office of City Auditor analysis; see links within table for relevant reports

Access to Public Health Data

As described above, the City has broad access to data on gun violence patterns through SPD and the KCPAO. We found that the City does not currently have access to evaluation information from the King County Regional Office of Gun Violence Prevention. [6] Further, although the City's Human Services Department (HSD) indicated to our office in 2022 that it was "establishing routine data reviews of Harborview Medical Center gunshot injury information and Seattle Police Department shots fired information to inform HSD's ongoing evaluation of programs that address gun violence," HSD did not provide our office with these data-review reports.

Public health data is critical to fully understanding patterns of gun violence in Seattle. In 2021, King County was named as one of 15 jurisdictions in a federal initiative to prevent and respond to gun crime, with access to federal resources and supports. However, this information and access is not routinely shared with the City. It was beyond the scope of our audit to investigate this communication issue between the City and the agencies that hold this data (e.g., Public Health Seattle and King County, King County Regional Office of Gun Violence Prevention). However, the City will have to address the issue of access to public health data, including data from the King County Regional Office of Gun Violence Prevention, if it opts to develop more systematic reporting on gun violence patterns.

Other jurisdictions use more systematic approaches to sharing information on gun violence patterns

While we were not able to conduct an exhaustive review of best practices for this audit, our technical assistance providers from PERF offered examples of jurisdictions that are using systematic approaches to sharing information on gun violence patterns, including sharing information with the public to promote evaluation and accountability. The City of Baltimore has developed an approach to identifying gun violence patterns and sharing that information broadly and systematically.

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[6] In 2022, as part of our recommendation follow-up on our Street Outreach report, the City's Human Services Department (HSD) reported to us that it "holds a $1.5 million contract with Public Health Seattle-King County for the Regional Peacekeepers Collective (RPKC). Some of this funding supports staff who perform ongoing evaluation to assess whether the Public Health approach to reducing gun violence has a measurable impact. In this approach, providers connect gunshot victims with services that support the victim and family with the goal of interrupting cycles of violence. Through RPKC, HSD is supporting rigorous evaluation of a program with a Street Outreach Component." A rigorous evaluation of the RPKC could provide the City with helpful information on gun violence patterns. However, during this audit, HSD management indicated that HSD does not receive gun violence evaluations from Public Health Seattle-King County. HSD indicated that they anticipate that they will receive the final evaluation from King County when it is completed.

Evaluation and Accountability are Central to Baltimore's Violence Prevention Plan

In 2020, the Baltimore City Council passed the Biennial Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan Ordinance. Then Council President (and now Mayor) Brandon M. Scott, said, "The Baltimore Police Department cannot be expected to reduce crime alone. All of our agencies have a role to play in addressing gun violence." The ordinance called for the Baltimore Mayor's Office to publish a biennial violence reduction plan with several city and state agencies. The legislation also required the "comprehensive crime reduction strategy to include an analysis of criminal justice data, an assessment of holistic, non-policing efforts aimed at crime reduction, and the establishment of goals, priorities, and standards for crime reduction in Baltimore."

Baltimore's homicides declined 23% and non-fatal shootings declined 34% from 2023 to 2024.

Baltimore's work on violence prevention is led by the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE). MONSE is responsible for overseeing Baltimore's violence prevention plan. The plan, originally developed in 2021, is based on four "pillars":

- Public health approach to violence

- Youth justice and violence reduction

- Community engagement and interagency collaboration

- Evaluation and accountability

Since releasing the violence prevention plan in 2021, Baltimore has seen declines in fatal and non-fatal shootings. Between 2023 and 2024, homicides and non-fatal shootings fell 23 percent and 34 percent, respectively.

In addition, Baltimore's Public Safety Accountability Dashboard—which notes that it is designed for "transparency" and to "allow the public to hold agencies accountable"—includes historical data on crimes, including homicides and non-fatal shootings as well as data on arrests, convictions, and demographics. Baltimore's MONSE website (see Exhibit 6 below) also contains "both regular reporting and special reports related to the agency's charge to implement Baltimore's all-hands-on-deck public safety strategy." This currently includes three rigorous research evaluations conducted by researchers from the University of Pennsylvania and Johns Hopkins University.

Exhibit 6: Examples of publicly available gun violence data in other cities

The **City of Indianapolis** conducted a rigorous Gun Violence Problem Analysis and identified government costs associated with each gun homicide and injury shooting.

The **City of Portland's** interactive Gun Violence Trends Report allows the public to track progress with gun violence case closures.

The **City of Baltimore** shares regular progress reports and rigorous evaluation reports.

Source: Office of City Auditor

As of January 2025, Portland's Gun Violence Trends Report showed a 35% decrease in total shooting incidents in the previous 12 months.

In July 2022, the Mayor of Portland, Oregon declared a state of emergency to address rising gun violence in the city, and the City of Portland invested in "Portland Ceasefire," an evidence-based strategy known as focused deterrence.[7] Portland Ceasefire provides monthly public updates on its referral data. The Portland Police Bureau launched an interactive public-facing Gun Violence Trends Report. Data as of January 31, 2025, showed a 35 percent decrease in total shooting incidents in the previous 12 months as compared with February 2021 to January 2024.

A large body of research evidence shows that violence disproportionately concentrates among small numbers of individuals, groups, and locations at the highest risk for violence (see for example (Abt & Hahn, 2024). Action 2 of DOJ's Violent Crime Reduction Roadmap (referenced earlier in this report) states that jurisdictions should identify the key people and places driving violence. Jurisdictions can get training and assistance from DOJ to conduct such analyses and then create plans to curb violence.[8]

In addition, four cities, Washington D.C., Austin, Texas, Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Indianapolis, have recently worked with the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR) to conduct a Gun Violence Problem Analysis, a research-based methodology to identify the specific nature of gun violence in the jurisdiction and the unique characteristics of groups and individuals at highest risk of being involved in gun violence. In addition, Indianapolis is one of 27 jurisdictions that has worked with NICJR to identify the specific governmental costs associated with each gun homicide and injury shooting, including crime scene response, hospitalization and rehabilitation, criminal justice, incarceration, victim support, and lost tax revenue. Just one year after Indianapolis implemented its gun violence reduction strategy, it reported achieving a 16 percent reduction in homicides and a 14 percent reduction in non-fatal shootings, representing the city's largest year-over-year reduction in 20 years.

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[7] Focused deterrence is an evidence-based strategy for reducing violent crime, used also in Baltimore and numerous other cities. Our 2015 Street Outreach audit noted that the City of Seattle does not use a focused deterrence approach to address violent crime and victimization, and that is still the case today.

[8] As previously mentioned, as part of our audit we requested and received technical assistance from this Department of Justice resource. This technical assistance included the development of an October 2024 Gun Violence Landscape analysis. This report assesses gun violence trends in Seattle and compares these trends to King County overall and other cities in King County. Data and supplementary analyses used to support this report were provided by the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office. Ongoing federal technical assistance is subject to availability of federal funding.

Recommendation 1

The City of Seattle should develop systematic reporting on gun violence patterns to City departments, other government agencies, elected officials, and the public/community stakeholders. The U.S. Department of Justice (through the Office of Justice Programs and the Police Executive Research Forum) is willing, as federal funding permits, to continue to provide technical assistance to Seattle to address this recommendation.

The City's CARE Department could be a convener for systematic information-sharing on gun violence patterns in Seattle

The City of Seattle established the City's Community Assisted Response and Engagement (CARE) Department in October 2023. According to CARE's website, its mission is to "improve public safety, by unifying and aligning the City's community-focused public safety investments and services, to resolve low-risk calls for behavioral health matters though diversified responses that are evidence-based, effective, innovative and compassionate."

In addition, the ordinance that established CARE called for the department to "create a new initiative to integrate the City's violence intervention programs, using research and evidence-based strategies to reduce violence, including identifying specific and measurable outcomes. This initiative will focus initially on: (a) gun violence prevention interventions; (b) community-based intervention programs, including violence interrupters; (c) youth-focused programs; and use evidence-based public safety strategies to measure program success and develop future solutions."

CARE Department management indicated that work on this new initiative has not yet begun. Given CARE's mission, CARE may be positioned to help convene City departments and stakeholders involved with gun violence prevention and response and to help disseminate systematic reporting on gun violence patterns that we call for in Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 2

The Mayor's Office should provide an update to the Seattle City Council on the Community Assisted Response and Engagement (CARE) Department's ordinance-mandated new initiative to integrate the City's violence intervention programs. This should include the feasibility of CARE to convene City departments and partners involved with violence prevention and response and to help disseminate systematic reporting on gun violence patterns.

USE PROBLEM ANALYSIS AND AN "ALL-HANDS-ON-DECK" APPROACH TO ADDRESS GUN VIOLENCE

Section Summary

The City of Seattle does not routinely engage in the types of problem analyses that identify "key people, places, and behaviors most likely to be involved in violence" that provides the foundation for directed, effective gun violence strategies. In addition, the City does not routinely or systematically engage other City departments, other government entities, and community partners in an "all-hands-on-deck" approach to addressing gun violence. We present examples of other jurisdictions that use these problem analyses and a whole of government approach to address gun violence. We also present some opportunities for Seattle to use problem analysis and an all-hands-on-deck approach to addressing gun violence based on datasets gathered for this audit.

We recommend that to address gun violence the City improve its capacity for problem analysis and develop a framework for regular systematic coordination among City departments, other government entities, and community organizations.

The City of Seattle does not routinely use problem analysis to address gun violence

Problem analysis is the process of conducting in-depth, systematic analysis and assessment of crime problems at the local level. An October 2024 report on community violence problem analysis from the Violence Reduction Center (VRC) at the University of Maryland identified problem analyses including homicide reviews and place network investigations as "instrumental in directing local attention, energy, and resources towards the anti-violence strategies with the strongest likelihood of success" (Abt & Hahn, 2024). Examples of these analyses from jurisdictions around the country are included in the VRC report.

For example, the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission (MHRC) was found in a rigorous impact evaluation to be associated with a 52 percent decrease in the monthly count of homicides over an eight-year period. The MHRC was established to "support innovative homicide prevention and intervention strategies" using strategic

problem analysis and strategically focusing "limited enforcement and intervention activities on identifiable risks such as violent crime hot spot areas, highly active violent offenders, and repeat victims."

The MHRC is a multi-tiered strategy with four levels:

- **Level 1 –** real-time response by the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD), also a social service agency provides crisis intervention and case management services, mentoring and emotional support, and home-based health care to victims' families.

- **Level 2 –** monthly detailed reviews of each homicide by MPD units, local institutions (e.g., Milwaukee Housing Authority, Milwaukee Public Schools, etc.), prosecutors, corrections, and federal partners (e.g., Milwaukee High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area [HIDTA]; Drug Enforcement Agency [DEA]; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives [ATF], etc.). Official data are supplemented with knowledge from the line-level law enforcement about the circumstances of the homicide, and the relationships among victims and offenders.

- **Level 3 –** reviews of closed cases with a broad array of public health, social services provider agencies, community organizations, faith-based organizations, and City agencies including the Milwaukee Mayor's Office, Public Health, and the Department of Neighborhoods. This review broadens the understanding of the homicide beyond the Level 2 information to include community-level contributing factors and to identify community interventions that may be appropriate.

- **Level 4 –** semi-annual review open to all interested members of the community as well as Level 2 and 3 participants. This includes discussion of aggregate district-level information on victims and suspects, the known circumstances of incidents, and progress of violence prevention efforts. Community members provide feedback on interventions and policy recommendations.

Monthly homicide counts fell 52% in Milwaukee over eight years through its Homicide Review Commission, which includes local, state, and federal agencies and a broad array of community partners.

The evaluation of the MHRC also found that the recommendations from Milwaukee's homicide reviews "better positioned criminal justice, social service, and community-based organizations to address high-risk places and high-risk people central to recurring homicide problems" (Azrael, Braga, & O'Brien, 2013). Jurisdictions including Boston, Baltimore, Minneapolis, and Stockton, California have used homicide reviews to inform the development of their violence prevention plans. We were not able to identify any process or practice in Seattle similar to a homicide review commission.

Further, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health has used the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission as a model for a framework they developed called Violence Reduction Councils (VRCs).

According to Johns Hopkins, jurisdictions that have adopted the VRC infrastructure "have improved and strengthened partnerships and increased the capacity of participating systems, agencies and individuals to identify systematic opportunities for prevention to build and sustain positive change reducing violence." Researchers from Johns Hopkins have offered to provide free technical assistance to the City of Seattle to help understand and implement this violence reduction coordination framework.

An emerging type of problem analysis that can be applied to gun violence is the place network investigation (PNI). A 2018 implementation of PNI in Las Vegas reduced gun-related offenses at the targeted location by 39 percent in one year (from 23 offenses to 14). PNI involves identifying locations consistently linked to criminal activity, including where the crime occurs as well as places where offenders routinely meet or use the locations for staging or supplying. Those locations are shared with a PNI Investigative Board consisting of city departments and community organizations that can prioritize city resources to try to "dismantle" this network. They can work to do so in a variety of ways, such as using legal or regulatory tactics (like revoking licenses or requiring physical changes to buildings) or requiring new employee training or management practices (Herold, Engel, Corsaro, & Clouse, 2020).

> **A Place Network Investigation in Las Vegas reduced gun-related offenses by 39% in one year.**

Seattle Has Not Systematically Implemented Problem-Oriented Policing to Address Gun Violence

Problem analyses like homicide reviews have evolved from problem-oriented policing and evidence-based, public health problem-solving frameworks. Decades of research show strong and consistent evidence that problem-oriented-policing (POP) is an effective strategy for reducing crime and disorder. POP requires police to use problem-solving to address chronic problems, rather than using traditional reactive efforts. POP interventions commonly use the SARA (scanning, analysis, response, assessment) model to identify problems, carefully analyze the conditions contributing to the problem, develop a tailored response to target these underlying factors, and evaluate outcome effectiveness. POP has been effectively used to address a range of crime types, including violent crimes and property crime. [9]

Although POP has existed since the 1980s, the City has not systematically implemented it. In fact, the City's lack of experience with POP was seen as a limiting factor in a federally funded pilot project designed to address two downtown Seattle crime hot spots (Gill, et al., 2018). Our 2023 audit on organized retail crime in Seattle recommended that the City consider using free technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice to begin to apply POP techniques

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[9] A 2020 meta-analysis of 34 studies of POP found a statistically significant 34 percent reduction in crime and disorder in the POP treatment areas compared to the control sites (Hickle, Weisburd, Telep, & Peterson, 2020).

to address known organized retail crime fencing operations. [10] These same resources could be used to help the City apply POP techniques to address gun violence. Further, as we described in our 2024 audit on places in Seattle where overdoses and crimes are concentrated, the City has not routinely used an evidence-based public health problem-solving framework to address places where crime is concentrated.

In contrast, Cincinnati has codified its requirement that the Cincinnati Police Department use problem-oriented policing in its police procedures manual. This grew out of Cincinnati's 2002 Collaborative Agreement in which the City and police union entered into the agreement to settle litigation related to use of force. The agreement sets forth that the City "shall adopt problem solving as the principal strategy for addressing crime and disorder problems." It also calls on the City to "develop and implement a plan to coordinate the City's activities so that multi-agency problem solving with community members becomes a standard practice." It requires the parties to conduct community problem-oriented policing (CPOP) training "for community groups, jointly promote CPOP, and implement said CPOP training" and requires that problem solving "continue to be emphasized" in police department trainings. Cincinnati officials indicated that currently community organizations that receive City funding are required to complete problem-solving training.[11]

Recommendation 3

The City of Seattle should improve its capacity for problem analysis to address gun violence, including 1.) implementing problem-oriented policing, 2.) exploring the use of problem analyses such as homicide reviews and place network investigations, and 3.) requiring organizations that receive City funding to address gun violence to complete evidence-based problem-solving training.

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[10] For example, the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office funds a clearinghouse of information on POP. In addition, the Bureau of Justice Assistance offers consultation and short-term technical assistance to local governments and law enforcement agencies that includes implementing evidence-based programs, such as POP.

[11] For example, the Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area offers free training for local government departments, service providers, and community organizations in the Strategic Prevention Framework, an evidence-based problem-solving framework developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Data suggest that the City is missing opportunities to apply multi-departmental collaborative problem-solving to address gun violence

The previous examples of Milwaukee's Homicide Review Commission and Las Vegas' place network evaluation highlight how other jurisdictions involve other City departments, other local institutions (e.g., school district), state and local agencies, and community organizations in an all-hands-on-deck approach to addressing gun violence.

Baltimore City's Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan, "recognizes that every agency, institution, and organization that interfaces with Baltimoreans has a role to play in preventing violence in our communities." Baltimore's Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) established and implemented an interagency coordination infrastructure in partnership with the city's Chief Administrative Officer and fellow city agencies including the Department of Public Works, Mayor's Office of African American Male Engagement, Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success, Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore Fire Department, the Department of Housing and Community Development, the State's Attorney's Office, and the Baltimore County Health Department.[12]

Another example is Newark, New Jersey's Public Safety Collaborative which states that,

> "Public safety efforts need to be data-driven and evidence-based. While the City of Newark and its police department (NPD) has the technological capacity for extensive data collection and management, there needs to be an equally robust framework for collaborative problem-solving and community engagement. There is also a need to coordinate multiple resources in efficient and effective ways. Newark's wealth of 'big data' requires a structured and repeatable process for its analysis and review in order to become actionable by a variety of municipal departments and their community partners. This needs to be done in a measured and transparent way."

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[12] See pp. 19-20 of Baltimore's 2024 Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan Update.

This **[four-minute video from the Newark Public Safety Collaborative](#)** describes their collaborative model for using data to engage City departments and community partners to address places where shootings are most likely to occur.
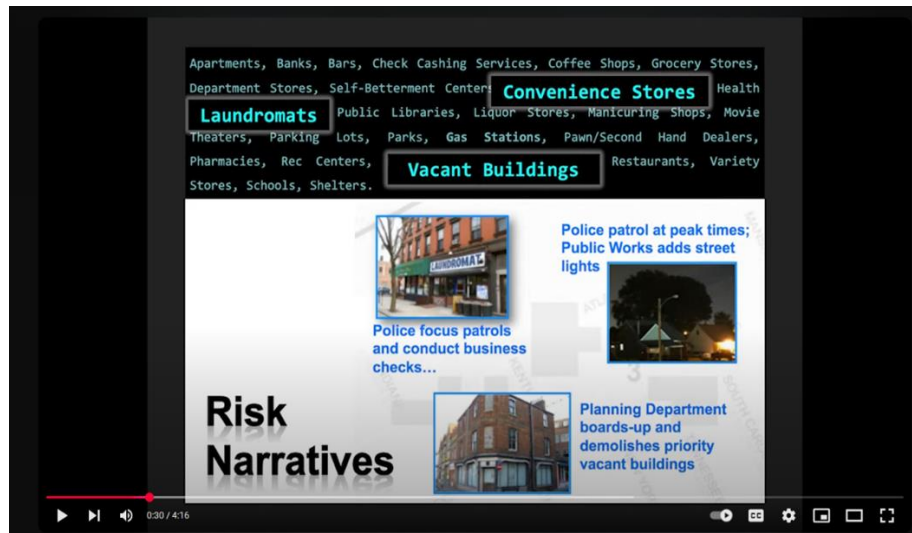
Source: Newark Public Safey Collaborative, https://youtu.be/-az_Q8shgX0

During this audit, we reviewed existing data on gun violence patterns that is produced by SPD's Investigations Bureau and the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office (KCPAO) Crime Strategies Unit. We also received new analyses (citywide shots fired and shots fired in parks) of gun violence patterns from SPD's Performance Analytics and Research section and a Seattle gun violence landscape analysis from the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), which provides technical assistance on behalf of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

These datasets point to current gun violence patterns in Seattle that might benefit from a collaborative problem-solving approach involving other City departments, local/state/federal agencies, and community partners. A systematic problem analysis process (e.g., Milwaukee's homicide review) would likely reveal greater potential areas for collaboration to address Seattle's current gun violence patterns. Below, we offer a few potential examples.

Gun Violence in Seattle Parks

The KCPAO Crime Strategies Unit indicated that there are some variations in the types of places where gun violence is concentrated in Seattle compared with other King County cities. For example, in south King County, shootings concentrate around apartment complexes, and in Seattle shootings concentrate in and around parks and community centers. However, at the time of our audit Seattle Parks and Recreation (Parks) did not have a comprehensive list of shootings in Seattle parks. Parks staff maintained a file of shootings based on reports from staff and media. At our request, SPD Performance Analytics and Research created a custom report that identified the count of shots fired and gun violations, subjects of shots fired, and victims of shots fired registered at or within 100 feet of parks between January 2021 and

August 2024. Their report identified 11 parks with a high incidence of shootings and shots fired (see Exhibit 7 below).

Exhibit 7: Seattle Parks with high incidences of shootings and shots fired (January 2021 to August 2024)

Parks	Fatal Shooting	Non-Fatal Shooting	Shots Fired (Eyewitness/Casings/ Property Damage)	Total
Beer Sheva Park	0	3	9	**12**
Cheasty Greenspace	1	0	10	**11**
Cal Anderson Park	3	4	2	**9**
Magnuson Park	0	4	5	**9**
Alki Beach Park	1	1	5	**7**
Yesler Terrace Park	0	3	4	**7**
Hamilton Viewpoint Park	0	2	4	**6**
Jose Rizal Park	1	1	3	**5**
Garfield Playfield	0	1	4	**5**
Powell Barnett Park	0	2	2	**4**
Stan Sayres Memorial Park	0	3	0	**3**

Source: Seattle Police Department Performance Analytics and Research

This information could be helpful to the City in focusing limited City resources on the parks with the highest levels of gun violence. There are many proven-effective place-based strategies for reducing violent crime, such as improved lighting and increased access controls that could be effective at these park locations.[13]

Nexus with Homelessness

People experiencing homelessness are at high risk for violent victimization, including fatal and non-fatal shootings (see for example, (Dell, Vaughn, & Salas-Wright, 2023). Data collected for this audit suggest a nexus between homelessness and gun violence in Seattle, though more problem analysis would be needed to understand this relationship more fully and identify strategies that may be effective in addressing it. For example, SPD tracks shooting incidents that occurred in or near a homeless encampment or in which at least one of the involved people (suspect or victim) was identified as unhoused

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[13] For more information on evidence-based strategies to reduce crime at places, see our July 2024 audit Addressing Places in Seattle Where Overdoses and Crime are Concentrated: An Evidence-Based Approach.

at the time of the incident. These monthly averages are presented below in Exhibit 8.

Exhibit 8: Monthly average of shooting incidents with a homelessness nexus

Year	Monthly Average of Shooting Incidents with a Homelessness Nexus
2021	9.4
2022	9.7
2023	5.8
2024 (Jan,1 – July 31, 2024)	4.6

Source: Seattle Police Department Investigations and Criminal Intelligence Unit

Compared with greater King County, Seattle experiences a disproportionate share of gun violence incidents occurring at homeless encampments. An analysis prepared by PERF and the KCPAO Crime Strategies Unit, for January 1, 2021, to September 5, 2024, indicates that of the 150 total gun violence incidents they identified as occurring at homeless encampments county-wide, 89.33 percent (134) occurred in Seattle.

The City of Seattle might have an opportunity to learn in real time from Portland, Oregon, which is also grappling with gun violence affecting people experiencing homelessness. As of January 31, 2025, overall gun violence in Portland fell by 23 percent in the past 12 months compared with February 2023 to January 2024. However, The Oregonian reported that five of the first 15 homicides in 2024 in Portland had involved a person experiencing homelessness, and the City of Portland was considering tailoring its evidence-based focused-deterrence gun violence strategy, Portland Ceasefire, to meet the specific needs of this population.

Shooting Events Related to Domestic Violence

SPD data show that shots fired with a nexus to domestic violence increased during the pandemic and continue to be elevated. The highest counts were August and November 2023 with eight shooting events related to domestic violence in each of those months. Baltimore's Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan has sought to integrate intimate partner violence (IPV) prevention with its community violence intervention efforts. Baltimore is piloting an IPV high risk case review process in partnership with the Baltimore Police Department, Corrections, prosecutors, and community providers. A similar high risk case review might be helpful in Seattle given the elevated instances of shooting events related to domestic violence.

Illegal Drugs and Gun Violence in Seattle

Although SPD Investigations Bureau analysts read every case file and speak with investigators, they indicated that it can be difficult to establish a pattern with a nexus in the data between illegal drug distribution and gun violence. Certain cases, however, do show a connection between drug trafficking and gun violence. For example, in August 2023 there was a mass shooting in a Seattle hookah lounge that resulted in three fatalities and six people injured. An October 2024 federal indictment included one of the men injured in that shooting, who was indicted along with 11 others in connection with a violent drug trafficking ring.

One potential way for the City to gather more information about the nexus between illegal drug distribution and gun violence is for Seattle to investigate fatal overdoses to learn more about Seattle drug trafficking operations. As we reported in our July 2024 audit on overdoses and crime, "The Seattle Police Department does not currently investigate fatal overdoses. Therefore, the City is missing opportunities to gather information about the drug distribution organizations that operate in Seattle's overdose hot spots." Other jurisdictions investigate fatal overdoses through multi-agency collaborations with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the U.S. Attorney. The Seattle field offices for both federal partners have offered to support Seattle in these investigations.

Opportunity for Greater Coordination with ATF

Tracing the chain of commerce for firearms that have been recovered by SPD can provide insights on the pathways through which Seattle gun criminals acquire their firearms and can help inform policies and practices to address gun violence. SPD commissioned a 2019 report on firearms recovered by SPD and submitted to the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) for tracing between 2013 and 2018. The report indicated that although SPD policy mandates that all recovered firearms involved in a crime or suspected of involvement in criminal activity must be submitted to the ATF for tracing, only 71.8 percent (2,581) of the total 3,596 gun recoveries during that period were submitted to ATF for tracing. An updated firearms trace report has been commissioned by the City, and it will include new data, including the percentage of firearms submitted by SPD to ATF for tracing.

Image of a bullet casing at a crime scene in downtown Seattle.
Source: Seattle Police Department Blotter

The ATF's new Crime Gun Intelligence Center in Seattle will provide an opportunity for more problem-solving between the City and other local jurisdictions.

In addition, in fall 2024, the ATF opened a new Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) in downtown Seattle that can provide an opportunity for greater coordination among Seattle, other King County jurisdictions, and the ATF. SPD currently analyzes recovered shell casings in near real time. However, some multi-jurisdiction investigations have been hampered because some jurisdictions in King County did not have access to real-time ballistics analysis. ATF officials indicated that CGIC will provide real-time ballistics analysis for jurisdictions including Kent, Federal Way, and Des Moines. This will help support and speed up multi-jurisdiction investigations. The CGIC includes three intelligence research analysts who can support ballistics analysis and help generate leads for local law enforcement, as well as two task-force officers and a supervisor. ATF officials indicated that addressing stolen firearms will be a focus for them. This could be a timely opportunity for Seattle as SPD data indicates that the number of guns reported or recorded as stolen increased from 2018 to 2023 (see Exhibit 9).

Exhibit 9: Number of stolen guns in Seattle increased from 2018 to 2023
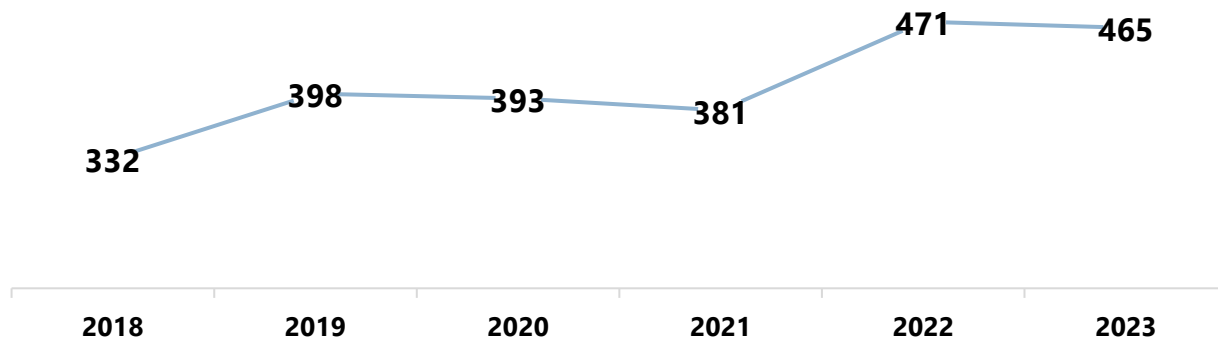
Source: Office of City Auditor analysis of Seattle Police Department data on stolen guns.

Recommendation 4

To address gun violence the City of Seattle should implement a framework for regular systematic coordination among City departments, other government entities, and community organizations.

ITEM FOR CITY COUNCIL CONSIDERATION: IMPROVE SPD INVESTIGATIONS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND AND ADDRESS GUN VIOLENCE

Section Summary

Information from police investigations is crucial for understanding more about current gun violence patterns in Seattle. Further, effective police investigations of gun violence cases can be an effective strategy for addressing gun violence. In 2022, Mayor Harrell issued an Executive Order directing SPD to engage national experts in a systemic review of SPD investigations of serious criminal offenses. A 2023 report by the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy assessed the state of SPD's investigative operations. It identified organizational weaknesses and found that SPD's "long-standing practices related to investigations are not well aligned with the research about effective investigations."

During our audit, we encouraged the Executive to brief the City Council on SPD's progress towards addressing the report's recommendations. Seattle Police Chief Shon Barnes provided the City Council with their first public briefing on this matter on February 25, 2025. While we did not assess SPD's progress as part of this audit, given the importance of effective investigations for addressing gun violence, we have included this as an item for City Council consideration.[14]

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[14] The initial draft of our audit report stated that City Council should consider requesting an update on SPD's progress. We sent our draft audit report to the Mayor's Office for comment in November 2024. Council later received an update from SPD in February 2025. We updated our item for consideration to say that Council should continue to monitor SPD's efforts to improve its investigations.

SPD Investigations Report: Recommendations in eight areas

In June 2023, SPD received a report on SPD investigations conducted by the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP) The report[15] found that SPD does not follow many best practices for "investigative effectiveness" and that "even if the SPD returns to full personnel capacity, these organizational weaknesses will continue if unattended" (Lum, et al., 2023).

Some of the CEBCP report's findings include:

- There was a lack of strategic leadership and direction for the SPD's Investigations Bureau's body of work and areas of responsibility.

- There was no evidence of standard operating procedures or manuals for investigations.

- Investigative approaches varied significantly across detectives and units, and investigators didn't know if the approaches they used were the most optimal.

- Supervisors did not have a standard case management tool to assess the performance of their unit and investigators regularly.

- The application, selection, onboarding, and training processes for investigations in SPD were informal, nonstrategic, undocumented, and unstructured.

- SPD had few opportunities for collaboration, teamwork, and strategizing between its Patrol and Investigations bureaus.

> *"Even if the SPD returns to full personnel capacity, these organizational weaknesses will continue if unattended. "*
>
> (Lum, et al., 2023)

The CEBCP report noted that the problems with SPD investigations were not simply a matter of staffing but included longstanding "organizational infrastructure problems that impact the agency's operational capacity and potentially undermine its public legitimacy."

Lack of public legitimacy can have an adverse effect on public cooperation with gun violence investigations. SPD data indicates that that from 2021 to 2024, there has been an increase in public unwillingness to cooperate with gun violence cases. SPD shots fired incidents during which officers contacted an uncooperative subject or victim went from a monthly average of 6.9 per in 2021 to 14.4 in 2024.

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[15] The CEBCP report made recommendations in eight areas:
1.) State of Investigations and Agency Context 2.) Organization of Investigations 3.) Selection, Onboarding, and Training 4.) Investigative Process and Workload 5.) Leadership and Supervision 6.) Information Systems for Case Tracking and Management 7.) Investigative Support Services 8.) Investigations and Patrol.

The CEBCP report noted that many of the individuals interviewed for the report "expressed a desire to see the SPD improve internally and in its service to the City of Seattle." Due to the significant findings in the CEBCP report and the implications for gun violence investigations, we encouraged the Executive to brief the City Council on SPD's progress towards addressing the report's recommendations. SPD Chief Shon Barnes provided the City Council with their first public briefing on this matter on February 25, 2025. Chief Barnes indicated that more work is needed to address the report's recommendations. Therefore, we offer the following item for City Council consideration.

Item for City Council Consideration

The City Council should continue to monitor the Seattle Police Department's efforts to address findings from a 2023 report that identified weaknesses in SPD's investigative operations.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

This audit regarding current patterns of gun violence in Seattle was requested by Seattle City Council President Sara Nelson in July 2024. This audit grew out of a January 2024 request by Mayor Bruce Harrell and Council President Nelson.[16]

The scope of the audit was focused on recent patterns in gun violence (i.e., not all crime, nor all violent crime, just gun violence). Our analysis attempted to explore:

- Are there common patterns in gun violence in Seattle? (e.g., is there a nexus with gangs/groups, nexus with encampments, nexus with prostitution, nexus with domestic violence, nexus with drug distribution, nexus with drug use, etc.)

- Are there common patterns among shootings in Seattle? (e.g., proximity to parks, proximity to nightclubs, time of day, are the patterns for youth different from adults, etc.)

- Are there common patterns among gun violence victims? (e.g., known to the shooter, youth in a group, bystander, etc.)

To accomplish the audit's objectives, we performed the following:

- Interviewed officials in the City of Seattle, including officials in the Mayor's Office, Seattle Police Department, and Community Assisted Response and Engagement (CARE) Department

- Interviewed officials from the U.S. Department of Justice, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, and the cities of Baltimore, Cincinnati, and Tucson, Arizona

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[16] This audit request grew out of a January 8, 2024 audit request from Mayor Bruce Harrell and Seattle City Council President Sara Nelson that asked our office to update our 2012 assessment of crime prevention programs funded by the City, including programs operated by the City and those run by community-based nonprofit organizations. Like the 2012 assessment, the Mayor and Council President asked our office to identify the evidence-based programs, those with no evidence of effectiveness, those that may be promising, and those that may cause harm. In April 2024, the Mayor's Office requested that our crime prevention audit be put on hold "because HSD [the Human Services Department] is preparing to issue a new round of RFPs [requests for proposals] that will result in new funding opportunities." The Mayor's Office felt that "assessing these programs in the context of the RFP responses seems more prudent." On July 24, 2024, at the request of Seattle City Council President Sara Nelson, our office initiated this audit on the nature of the current gun violence problem in Seattle. On October 7, 2024 Seattle City Council President Sara Nelson requested that original audit of crime prevention programs be restarted.

- Requested and received technical assistance from the Police Executive Research Forum, including on analyzing existing data of gun violence in King County, researching best practices, and connecting with officials in jurisdictions outside Washington

- Requested data and analyses of gun violence from the Seattle Police Department, Seattle Parks and Recreation Department, Human Services Department, and King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office

- Researched best practices on analyzing gun violence data

As part of this audit, we did not evaluate the current effectiveness of gun violence prevention programs in Seattle.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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APPENDIX A
Mayor's Office Response

City of Seattle
Mayor Bruce Harrell

March 6, 2025

David G. Jones
Office of the City Auditor

Dear City Auditor Jones,

Thank you for the report "Four Recommendations to Better Understand and Address Current Gun Violence Patterns in Seattle" which Council President Nelson and Mayor Harrell requested in January 2024.

The issue of gun violence is critically important. Preventing gun violence is the top priority of our Police Department (SPD) and officers are seizing illegal guns and arresting offenders nearly every day.

Similar to cities like Baltimore, we have taken a holistic approach to addressing public safety and, more specifically, gun violence. Indeed, reducing gun violence and other violent crime is a key component of our *One Seattle Restoration Framework (the "Restoration Framework")*.

The *Restoration Framework* affirms that improving public safety involves collaboration across multiple City departments and programs. This includes our investments in community-based interventions, hospital-based support, and school safety measures. Additionally, the *Restoration Framework* establishes key performance indicators to be shared on public dashboards as part of our commitment to transparency and accountability. Our metrics and visualizations will evolve as we learn, iterate, and improve our programs and we are committed to identifying further metrics to help us build meaningful and sustainable solutions to increase collaboration between departments.

As an example of this holistic approach, in areas with high levels of gun violence we are expanding crisis response, mentorship programs, and resource navigation services. These comprehensive services are designed to address every aspect of this complex and challenging issue. At Harborview Medical Center, the City funds hospital-based violence interventions that connect victims and their families with trauma-informed care, financial assistance, housing support, and workforce development. Last year, the program expanded to serve gunshot victims of all ages.

Additionally, the City is working with Seattle Public Schools and King County to implement a three-part strategy focused on school-based safety measures, violence intervention, and law enforcement collaboration, with targeted efforts at 11 high-risk middle and high schools. We know that one way to prevent gun violence is to make sure our children get the strong start they deserve. We begin early in the all-important birth-to-five years through our investments in quality childcare, the home visitation program Nurse Family Partnership, and the Seattle Preschool Program. These efforts have strong research evidence demonstrating that the kids in these programs have lower levels of criminal legal system involvement and better education outcomes.

Moreover, we have strengthened law enforcement efforts to address gun violence hotspots and firearm-related crimes. The Police Department's Gun Violence Reduction Unit analyzes firearm incidents and utilizes the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network to identify trends and allocate

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resources effectively. SPD is actively engaged in regional task forces to investigate gun trafficking and enforce extreme risk protection orders. We have worked to expand regional collaboration, partnering with federal agencies such as the ATF and FBI on joint investigations, as well as with King County to coordinate gun violence reduction efforts. Later this year, we will release an updated gun trace report on firearm sources, trafficking patterns, and associated crimes.

Lastly, recognizing that gun violence is a regional and national problem, we are advocating for stronger state and federal regulations to restrict the proliferation of dangerous weapons. Seattle plans to lead a coalition to push for changes in state laws, including lifting preemption restrictions, implementing a permit-to-purchase system, and enhancing gun safety requirements. We also advocate for the authority to impose local firearm restrictions in sensitive areas, such as parks, playfields, and community centers. By combining local interventions with regional partnerships and state-level advocacy, Seattle aims to create a safer environment and reduce gun-related harm citywide.

Let me turn now to comments about your specific recommendations.

Recommendation 1 encourages the City to report gun violence patterns publicly. SPD currently maintains a public-facing online dashboard that includes some of the information you suggest should be reported. SPD strives to make its data and analyses as publicly available as possible within a highly regulated and inherently sensitive environment without compromising the integrity of active investigations. Consistent with this recommendation, SPD will further its existing plan to continuously expand and improve its online reporting within legal, ethical, and regulatory restrictions.

Recommendation 2 pertains to the CARE Department. We are prepared to update Council members on the status of the CARE Department enabling ordinance regarding the potential integration of violence intervention programs and improved data collection, sharing, and dissemination.

Recommendation 3 encourages SPD to improve its capacity for problem analysis and problem-oriented policing. SPD currently utilizes these evidence-based approaches and has been developing its analytic capabilities for over a decade. Evidence-based analysis is a priority for Chief Shon Barnes, and continuous improvement – the hallmark of a learning organization – is one of his priorities. SPD provided the additional response below:

> "SPD agrees that problem-oriented, evidence-based analysis is critical to effectively and efficiently meeting public safety challenges. That said, current and upcoming work and initiatives bear directly on this recommendation. SPD routinely works with the City Attorney's Office on a high-utilizer list, monitoring 'high risk' individuals who are candidates for Extreme Risk Protection Orders, and engaging with other city stakeholders around civil, regulatory, and CPTED work related to known problem locations. Additionally, SPD was one of the key drivers in assessing the San Francisco DMACC model for addressing quality of life/crime/disorder issues, an approach that is now one fundamental part of the City's DAT work around 3rd and Pike and 12th and Jackson (a report on that work, by Dr. Jackie Helfgott at Seattle University, will be published shortly). However, SPD also recognizes that Place Network Investigations (PNI), while applicable in many jurisdictions that have clustered gun violence, may not be readily applicable to the type of decentralized gun violence that exists in Seattle."

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> "SPD is energized to move forward and committed to continued and expanded work in this area, operationally and analytically, and appreciates City support in ensuring that it has leading edge tools, training, and staffing to meet these challenges."

Chief Barnes, having successfully implemented a problem-oriented approach in Madison, will introduce in Seattle his model of stratified policing to address immediate, short-term, and long-term complex public safety challenges, rooted in evidence-based practice and within a structure of organizational accountability. In addition, the Real Time Crime Center, including recently approved CCTV capabilities, will enable a faster, more efficient, and more precise approach to crime response later this year.

I also want to highlight the Downtown Activation Teams' (DAT) work since last fall. DAT efforts follow the data by focusing on areas with concentrated criminal activity with significant impacts on the community. DAT is a specific application of place-based problem solving that incorporates an all-of-government approach. DAT has three main strategies: (1) scheduled restoration actions to address visual disorder, cleanliness, and proactive policing, (2) a holistic outreach response to the homeless population with offers of services, (3) and long-term activation to revitalize and support the area. DAT's work has resulted in significant public safety improvements in the target areas and is the model we will follow going forward.

Recommendation 4 asserts that the City "should implement a framework for regular systematic coordination among City departments, other government entities, and community organizations to address gun violence." This type of collaboration and coordination was contemplated as part of the *Restoration Framework*. The City has taken the first step towards implementing this recommendation by establishing the multi-department and multi-stakeholder DAT. The City will be further expanding on this approach with the anticipated launch of the One Seattle Restoration Subcabinet. This entity will be responsible for the oversight of the various cross-sector initiatives and investments identified in the Framework, as well as driving an integrated and data-centric strategy to address our most pressing public safety issues, including gun violence.

Finally, the report urges the City Council to invite SPD to update the Council on the 2023 assessments of criminal case investigations. Chief Barnes briefed the Council on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, about the progress made thus far on implementing the recommendations from that assessment. SPD is more than willing to provide further briefings at the Council's request. (The external subject-matter experts who evaluated SPD's criminal investigation systems, policies, and practices did so at the Mayor's direction in Executive Order 2022-05, issued in July 2022. That order is attached and can also be read here.)

In closing, our city government is a learning organization. We strive to do better, improve performance, meet the expectations of the people of Seattle, and do so with integrity, fairness, and justice.

Sincerely,

Natalie Walton-Anderson

Natalie Walton-Anderson
Chief Public Safety Officer
Attachment: Executive Order 2022-05

City of Seattle
Mayor Bruce Harrell

Executive Order 2022-05: Directing the Seattle Police Department to Assess Policies, Protocols, and Practices Related to the Investigation of Criminal Offenses and Implement Necessary Solutions to Advance Justice and Serve the Needs of Crime Survivors.

An Executive Order to implement immediate solutions to address the need for additional investigation by the Seattle Police Department ("SPD" or "Police Department") of serious criminal offenses, increase the number of detectives assigned to SPD follow-up investigation units by implementing the recently announced recruitment and retention plan, improve the region's systemic handling of case investigations, especially regarding sexual assault, and to enhance victim care and support services.

WHEREAS, the number of Washington State certified police officers fully trained and available to be deployed by the Seattle Police Department has rapidly declined since 2019, leaving only 954 deployable officers as of May 2022, the lowest number since 1991; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 2020 and continuing today, the Police Department has been compelled to transfer officers from traffic enforcement, follow-up investigation units, and other specialized units to the Patrol Operations Bureau to respond to 911 calls involving life-threatening public safety emergencies and serious crimes in progress; and

WHEREAS, the necessity of transferring officers to 911 response positions has adversely impacted the Police Department's ability to conduct follow-up investigations of serious criminal offenses; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and the Chief of Police have identified the current number of fully trained and deployable police officers is inadequate to meet the Charter goal of "maintain[ing] adequate police protection in each district of the City," and on July 13, 2022, announced the implementation of an innovative and comprehensive police officer recruiting and retention plan to increase the number of fully trained and deployable officers to 1,450, a ratio of 1.9 officers per 1,000 residents of Seattle, which is a ratio consistent with the years before 2020; and

WHEREAS, a fully staffed Police Department is critical to the investigation of crimes of violence, including sexually motivated crimes, and efforts to hold people who commit these crimes accountable; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Chief of Police have identified the need for an objective systemic evaluation of the Police Department's Investigations Bureau, including the Sexual Assault Unit, and the handling of sexual assault investigations;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor of Seattle, declare that the lack of an adequate number of fully trained and deployable Seattle police officers puts at risk the peace, safety, and wellbeing of the people of Seattle and those who visit the City, and, in collaboration with Interim Chief of Police Adrian Diaz, order the following actions:

Executive Order 2022-05 (SPD Investigations)
Page 2 of 3
July 28, 2022

1. **Bolstering Criminal Case Follow-Up Investigations and Victim Care Services**

    a. No later than August 31, 2022, the Seattle Police Department will ensure that every reported felony crime of violence with sufficient evidence allowing for a follow-up investigation, including any backlogged sexual assault cases, is assigned to a case detective in sexual assault. The Human Services Department is piloting an effort to ensure domestic violence cases not assigned for further investigation will be offered victim support services.

    b. The Mayor and Chief of Police will seek additional funding to support efforts by victim advocates and medical providers to better connect survivors to care and support services, so they are treated with respect and compassion and that their crime reports are responded to with urgency following current trauma-informed practices.

    c. The Police Department shall review how victims of crimes of violence are kept informed about the status of their case from the point of initial reporting through the end of follow-up investigations, if any, to strengthen relationships between victims and the police, demonstrate respect for victims, and to acknowledge the dignity and worth of every individual.

    d. The Police Department and Human Services Department will ensure that officers, contracted providers, advocates, and others who interact with sexual assault survivors are directed to inform survivors that they should call 911 to report an assault – even when it is not "in progress" – and not call the non-emergency line.

1. **Assessment of Criminal Case Management Practices and Systems Used by the Police Department and Regional Partners**

    a. The Police Department shall engage national policing and criminal legal system experts to conduct a systemic review of police investigations of serious criminal offenses, assess current practices and procedures related to criminal case follow-up investigations, including case triage and assignment decisions, investigation rules and procedures, case file preparation, case file presentation-to-prosecutor practices, victim care services, and all management and review practices to determine the sufficiency and quality of investigations, all with the goal of continuous organizational improvement.

    The assessment should include system-wide identification of what is working well, what needs to be changed, what additional tools may be necessary, the appropriate types of follow-up units and their organization and staffing, case clearance rates compared to other similarly situated police agencies, and additional observations or recommendations the assessment team may wish to offer. The assessment should emphasize how investigators interact with victims of crime, how victims are cared for, and whether the most current trauma-informed practices are followed.

    b. The retained subject matter experts shall assist the Police Department in creating a follow-up investigations manual of rules, procedures, and acceptable practices to

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govern the work of follow-up detectives to ensure continuing compliance with accepted best practices and legal requirements.

c.   The work of the subject matter experts shall also assess the effectiveness of the victim care and support services currently provided by the City, including appropriate staffing levels, qualifications of victim advocates, and where this body of work should be housed to optimize effectiveness, advance justice, assist victims with understanding and navigating the police investigation process and, potentially, court processes and disposition of the case. This work aims to place the dignity and well-being of survivors of violent crime at the center of the Police Department's work.

2.   **Ongoing Case Review and Appointment of an Advisory Panel**

a.   The Police Department shall partner with subject-matter experts and appropriate organizations, including the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, to implement a series of ongoing case reviews of sexual assault investigations to help detectives prepare cases, improve processes, and care for and assist survivors.

b.   The Mayor and the Chief of Police will appoint an advisory panel of no more than six local sexual assault subject-matter experts and victim-survivors to assist the Police Department with the assessments identified in this order. This advisory panel will provide an outside perspective and their experiences with widely used and accepted best practices.

3.   **Collective Bargaining Law and Processes**

a.   In fulfilling this Executive Order, the City will comply in good faith with all required collective bargaining laws and processes.

Dated this 28th day of July 2022.

Bruce A. Harrell
Mayor of Seattle

APPENDIX B
List of Recommendations and Mayor's Office Responses

Recommendation 1:

The City of Seattle should develop systematic reporting on gun violence patterns to City departments, other government agencies, elected officials, and the public/community stakeholders. The U.S. Department of Justice (through the Office of Justice Programs and the Police Executive Research Forum) is willing, as federal funding permits, to continue to provide technical assistance to Seattle to address this recommendation.

Mayor's Office Concurrence: Concur

Mayor's Office Response: "Consistent with this recommendation, SPD will further its existing plan to continuously expand and improve its online reporting within legal, ethical, and regulatory restrictions."

Recommendation 2:

The Mayor's Office should provide an update to the Seattle City Council on the Community Assisted Response and Engagement Department's (CARE) ordinance-mandated new initiative to integrate the City's violence intervention programs. This should include the feasibility of CARE to convene City departments and partners involved with violence prevention and response and to help disseminate systematic reporting on gun violence patterns.

Mayor's Office Concurrence: Concur

Mayor's Office Response: "We are prepared to update Council members on the status of the CARE Department enabling ordinance regarding the potential integration of violence intervention programs and improved data collection, sharing, and dissemination."

Recommendation 3:

The City of Seattle should improve its capacity for problem analysis to address gun violence, including 1.) implementing problem-oriented policing, 2.) exploring the use of problem analyses such as homicide reviews and place network investigations, and 3.) requiring organizations that receive City funding to address gun violence to complete evidence-based problem-solving training.

Mayor's Office Concurrence: Concur

Mayor's Office Response: "Chief Barnes, having successfully implemented a problem-oriented approach in Madison, will introduce in Seattle his model of stratified policing to address immediate, short-term, and long-term complex public safety challenges, rooted in evidence-based practice and within a structure of organizational accountability. In addition, the Real Time Crime Center, including recently approved CCTV capabilities, will enable a faster, more efficient, and more precise approach to crime response later this year."

Recommendation 4:

To address gun violence the City of Seattle should implement a framework for regular systematic coordination among City departments, other government entities, and community organizations.

Mayor's Office Concurrence: Concur

Mayor's Office Response: "The City has taken the first step towards implementing this recommendation by establishing the multi-department and multi-stakeholder DAT [Downtown Activation Team]. The City will be further expanding on this approach with the anticipated launch of the One Seattle Restoration Subcabinet. This entity will be responsible for the oversight of the various cross-sector initiatives and investments identified in the [Mayor's Restoration] Framework, as well as driving an integrated and data-centric strategy to address our most pressing public safety issues, including gun violence."

APPENDIX C

Previous Audits Conducted by the Office of City Auditor Related to Crime and Violence Prevention

Since 2012, the Office of City Auditor has conducted audits related to the City's crime prevention investments, youth violence prevention, and street outreach for violence prevention.[17]

Although we recommended in these audits that the City evaluate its violence prevention investments to ensure that they are effective, these evaluations have not occurred. For example, during this audit, Human Services Department (HSD) management reported to us that the City had not received any evaluation information from its investments in the King County Regional Peacekeepers Collective that the City has been funding since 2021. HSD indicated that they anticipate that they will receive the final evaluation from King County when it is completed.

Crime Prevention Review: In 2012, at the request of the City Council, we worked with researchers at the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy to produce a report about the research evidence underpinning the City's investments in crime prevention. The primary finding of the report was of the 63 programs reviewed:
- 17 had strong or moderate evidence of effectiveness
- 35 had inconclusive evidence of effectiveness
- 3 had evidence for increasing crime
- 8 programs couldn't be matched to research or theory

The report also noted that while it is important to understand whether research indicates that a program is likely to be effective in reducing crime, we couldn't know whether all these City programs were effective in reducing crime because many did not measure their outcomes.

Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative (SYVPI): The City started SYVPI in 2009 to respond to the violent deaths of five young people. In response to a City Council request, we published two reports in January and March 2013 on SYVPI's logic model in which we raised questions about whether there was a clear linkage between SYVPI's strategies and its long-term outcomes measures. In October 2014, we published a consultant report that found a rigorous

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[17] Street outreach workers seek to connect with individuals engaged in violence to attempt to build positive relationships, discourage violent behavior, and connect the individuals with services. Street outreach workers may also mediate emerging conflicts among individuals or groups.

evaluation of SYVPI's effectiveness was not possible at the time due to issues with the initiative's design and implementation. The report outlined a series of steps that SYVPI could take to get ready for an evaluation in the future. In October 2015, we published a report on SYVPI that summarized two key conclusions from our previous SYVPI reports: 1) Changing adult-run systems can yield positive results for youth, and 2) support from City leaders can help ensure that efforts are focused and effective.

Street Outreach: In October 2015, we published a report on street outreach for violence prevention. The report concluded that street outreach had the potential to be a valuable component of a comprehensive violence reduction strategy for Seattle. However, research indicated that street outreach could be ineffective and might even cause harm to the people it is intended to serve when it is not deployed strategically and when it lacks certain key considerations. We made six recommendations to the City for strengthening its approach to street outreach. To date, three of the six recommendations have been implemented, and in 2024, we stopped tracking the status of the three remaining recommendations[18] because we had no evidence that they would ever be implemented.

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[18] The three 2015 street outreach recommendations that went unimplemented are:
- Develop a more sophisticated focused approach for identifying street outreach clients to ensure that it is focused on those at highest risk for violence and victimization;
- Strengthen the ability of street outreach to connect their clients' families with services that promote the importance of family as a protective factor; and
- Support a rigorous evaluation of street outreach to ensure that the efforts are effective for reducing violent crime and victimization and do not unintentionally cause harm.

As documented in our chronicle of unimplemented recommendations from the Street Outreach audit, during this period HSD conducted multiple reviews of its community safety investments, re-aligned its investments multiple times, and developed and issued multiple requests for proposals (RFPs) for community safety investments.

APPENDIX D

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.

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Addressing Places in Seattle Where Overdoses and Crime are Concentrated: An Evidence-Based Approach

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IB Osuntoki

David G. Jones, City Auditor

Seattle Office of City Auditor

Addressing Places in Seattle Where Overdoses and Crime are Concentrated: An Evidence-Based Approach

Report Highlights

Background

Fatal and non-fatal overdoses continue to increase in Seattle and King County. While overdose events and crimes against persons occur all over Seattle, there are certain small geographic areas in the city where these events are co-occurring and concentrated. From July 2022 to July 2023, 10 continuous street segments had a combined count of crimes against persons and overdose incidents of 100 or greater, accounting for a disproportionate amount of co-occurrence.

What We Found

Overdoses and crimes are concentrated at certain places in Seattle due to specific local conditions that exist at those locations. Diagnosing and disrupting the unique characteristics that contribute to overdose and crime concentrations at a location is best accomplished using an established place-based problem-solving approach that includes implementing evidence-based strategies to address overdoses and crimes. As part of our audit, we examined the use of a place-based problem-solving approach to address overdoses and crime at a case study site in Seattle on Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Mayor's Office designate a high-level project champion to oversee a place-based problem-solving approach that includes implementing evidence-based strategies to address overdoses and crime; working with the Seattle Office of Emergency Management and other departments to use a proven coordination system; seeking technical assistance from and collaboration with federal agencies; and regularly evaluating the City's efforts to address places where overdoses and crime are concentrated.

Mayor's Office and Council President's Responses

The Mayor's Office generally concurred with the recommendations and stated that they will continue collaborating with stakeholders to expand treatment options and public safety solutions (see Appendix A). City Council President Sara Nelson also provided a written response stating that she plans to support the recommendations legislatively and through collaboration with the Executive and external stakeholders (see Appendix B).

WHY WE DID THIS AUDIT

This audit was conducted in response to Mayor Bruce Harrell and former City Council President Debora Juarez's request for our office to prepare an audit that identifies and documents evidence-informed approaches for addressing areas in the city where crime and overdose incidents are concentrated.

HOW WE DID THIS AUDIT

In addition to our research of evidence-informed approaches, we used a case study methodology for this audit that examined a two-block area in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood, specifically Third Avenue from Virginia Street to Blanchard Street, to ensure that our audit findings and recommendations would be applicable and useful to the current conditions in Seattle. We also received technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance's Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program (COSSUP) and the Office of National Drug Control Policy's Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (NW HIDTA).

Seattle Office of City Auditor
David G. Jones, City Auditor
www.seattle.gov/cityauditor

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INTRODUCTION

Audit Overview

This audit was conducted in response to Mayor Bruce Harrell and former City Council President Debora Juarez's request for our office to prepare an audit that identifies and documents evidence-informed approaches for addressing areas in the city where crime and overdose incidents are concentrated.

In addition to our research of evidence-informed approaches, we used a case study methodology for this audit that examined a two-block area in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood, specifically Third Avenue from Virginia Street to Blanchard Street, to ensure that our audit findings and recommendations would be applicable and useful to the current conditions in Seattle. The following organizations participated in meetings and/or visits at our case study site during our audit:

- Plymouth Housing
- YWCA Seattle/King/Snohomish
- Harborview Third Avenue Clinic
- Evergreen Treatment Services-REACH
- King County Metro Transit
- Downtown Seattle Association
- Belltown United
- West Precinct Advisory Council
- Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area

Photo: Staff from community organizations gather with the Office of City Auditor and the Seattle Police Department outside Plymouth Housing's Langdon and Anne Simons Senior Apartments during a walking tour at our audit case study site. Source: Office of City Auditor

Our audit approach followed two evidence-informed frameworks for community problem-solving from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:

- The Strategic Prevention Framework, and
- 2023 Guide for Engaging Community Coalitions to Decrease Opioid Overdose Deaths

For this audit, the Office of City Auditor received technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance's Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program (COSSUP) and the Office of National Drug Control Policy's Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (NW HIDTA).

Landscape of Synthetic Drugs in Seattle

Synthetic Drugs Are Driving the Increase in Overdoses in Seattle and King County

As we reported in our 2022 audit, Action is Needed to Explore Ways to Offer an Evidence-Based Treatment for People Who Use Methamphetamine, fatal and non-fatal overdoses continue to increase in Seattle and King County. According to the King County Medical Examiner's Overdose Dashboard, there were 1,338 fatal overdoses in King County in 2023, which represents a 33 percent increase from 2022. In 2023, opioid overdoses (mostly nonfatal) treated by King County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) increased by 44 percent from 2022 to 8,341 overdoses in King County, according to Public Health – Seattle & King County. Seattle accounted for 57 percent (761) of the fatal overdoses and 51 percent (4,254) of the opioid overdoses treated by EMS in 2023 although Seattle made up just 32 percent of King County's population, according to 2020 census data.

Also, as we reported in 2022, poly-substance use is increasingly contributing to fatal overdoses in King County, including Seattle. In 2023, the majority (60.3 percent) of all fatal overdoses involved the combination of an opioid (e.g., fentanyl) and a stimulant (e.g., methamphetamine, cocaine).

Fentanyl and heroin are both opioids. However, unlike heroin, fentanyl is a synthetic opioid, meaning that it can be produced in very large quantities without an agricultural component.[1] Fentanyl is also easier and less costly to make, distribute, and sell than heroin. Synthetic drugs have contributed significantly to the rising overdoses in our

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[1] The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) indicates that synthetic drugs begin with precursor chemicals that are made in unregulated businesses in China and shipped to Mexico where the chemicals are synthesized into synthetic drugs, such as fentanyl, then distributed to the U.S., including Seattle.

area. In 2023, there were 1,087 fentanyl-involved deaths compared with 34 heroin-involved deaths in King County.

Exhibit 1: Public Health – Seattle and King County's Overdose Dashboard 2013 - 2023
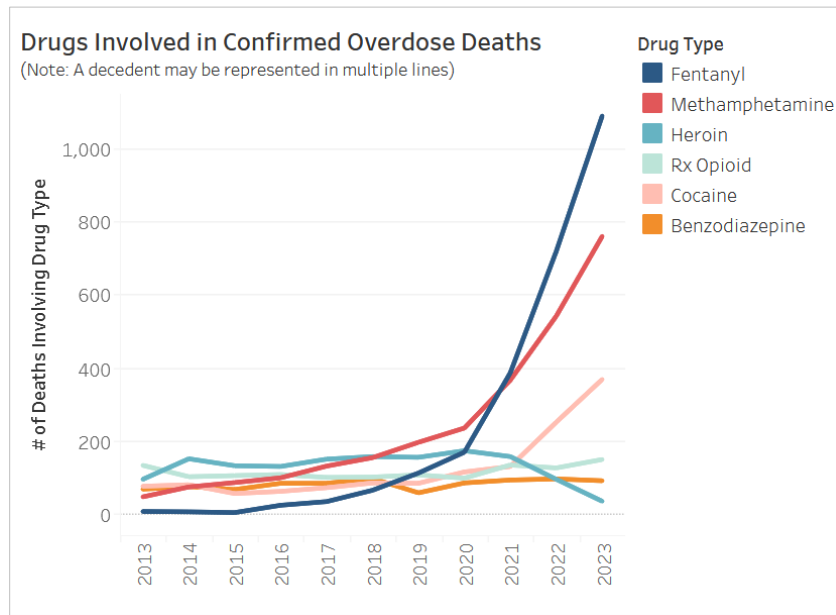
Source: Public Health – Seattle & King County

Synthetic Drug Supply in Seattle

Drug seizures in King County in 2023 indicate that approximately 60 percent of fentanyl is in pill form and 40 percent is in powder form. According to Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (NW HIDTA), smoking is the most widespread form of use[2] of synthetic drugs, including fentanyl and methamphetamine, in Washington state today.

According to NW HIDTA, synthetic drug prices demonstrated a notable drop between 2022 and 2023 in Washington state. One gram of methamphetamine that had an average street value of $8.48 in 2022 dropped to $5.88 in 2023. A fentanyl tablet that had a street value of $4.80 in 2022 dropped to $2.44 in 2023. Law enforcement officials reported to us that in 2024 the current street value of fentanyl in Seattle is less than $1 per tablet.

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[2] Prior to the rise of synthetic drugs, intravenous heroin use had been a widespread form of use in Seattle. In our 2020 report, Five Steps the City of Seattle Should Take to Reduce Trash Around Unsanctioned Encampments, we noted that improperly discarded needles and syringes had required significant City resources to clean up. With the rise of synthetic drugs, injection drug use has now been largely replaced by smoking synthetic drug powder or smoking ground-up synthetic drug tablets, often on pieces of aluminum foil.

> *"I've been with the DEA over 25 years, and this is the worst drug crisis I've ever seen in my life."*
>
> *- David Reames, Special Agent in Charge, Seattle Field Division, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)*
>
> Source: The Fight Against Fentanyl, Seattle Channel, October 30, 2023

David Reames
Seattle Field Division, DEA

Another change brought about in the current landscape of synthetic drugs is the frequency of drug use. According to law enforcement officials and behavioral health experts, fentanyl produces a high that is intense but short in duration. Therefore, people using fentanyl may use the drug frequently, up to 20 times per day. People who use fentanyl may also use it in combination with other synthetic drugs, such as methamphetamine, to alter or extend the effects of the fentanyl.

The daily routine of acquiring and using synthetic drugs many times per day has effects on neighborhood health and individual health. In a survey[3] of 138 people at our case study site on Third Avenue, 74 percent of respondents indicated that people are using drugs multiple times per day, and 67 percent noticed people selling drugs multiple times per day. And for some individuals seeking treatment, breaking the routine of acquiring and using drugs throughout the day has been a further challenge to their recovery. Some individuals in a pilot treatment program in Seattle have indicated that they struggle filling their time, and the lure of inexpensive and widely available street drugs hampers their recovery efforts.

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[3] In January 2024, using the Housing Environment Survey tool, we gathered some preliminary data from 138 people who work or live at the Third Avenue case study site, including permanent supportive housing residents. The survey tool captures various indicators of neighborhood social climate, neighborhood quality, and neighborhood safety. For example, only 11 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they feel safe in their neighborhood.

Crime and Overdose Concentration in Seattle

10 Continuous Street Segments Had 100+ Crimes Against Persons and Overdose Incidents Combined

While overdose events and crimes against persons occur all over Seattle, there are certain small geographic areas in the city where these events are co-occurring and concentrated. The Seattle Police Department analyzed data on crimes against persons and overdose incidents responded to by the Seattle Fire Department from July 2022 to July 2023. We found that 10 continuous street segments had a combined count of crimes against persons and overdose incidents of 100 or greater, accounting for a disproportionate amount of co-occurrence.

We selected a case study site for our audit that sits within the location that has the fourth highest concentration of crime and overdose within Seattle. Specifically, between July 2022 and July 2023, at the case study site there were 11 fatal overdoses (64 percent involved a combination of synthetic drugs). Data from the King County Medical Examiner's Office indicates 10 of the 11 fatal overdoses (91 percent) occurred in or outside of the three permanent supportive housing buildings at the location. During this period, there were also 30 overdose calls for service, and 34 crimes against persons (71 percent were assaults). Notably, between January 2023 and July 2023, four staff who worked for the partner organizations within the case study site were victims of these crimes.

Exhibit 2: Top 10 Continuous Street Segments with the Highest Number of Overdose Responses and Crime Incidents*

Street Names	Street Number	Joint Count
Pike St from 2nd to 5th	201 - 498	352
3rd Ave from Union to Pine	1400 - 1599	344
3rd Ave from Jefferson to Marion	500 - 899	282
3rd Ave from Virginia to Battery	2000 - 2399	195
Pine St from 2nd to 5th	201 - 418	148
Broadway from E Union to E Pine	1400 - 1599	119
9th Ave from Alder to Jefferson (Harborview)	300 - 499	113
4th Ave from Union to Pine	1400 - 1549	112
S Jackson St from 10th Ave S to Rainier Ave S	1001 - 1398	109
E Pike St from 9th to 11th	901 - 1098	104

Includes Case Study Site

* There are differences in the numbers of National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) Offenses/Codes included in Seattle Police Department (SPD) Data-Driven unit data and those included in the Office of City Auditor analysis of crime against persons in Appendix G.

Source: Data compiled by SPD Data-Driven unit based on request from the Office of City Auditor

Audit Case Study Site: Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard

For our audit case study, we focused on a two-block area in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood, specifically Third Avenue from Virginia Street to Blanchard Street, where overdoses and crimes against persons are highly concentrated. This area includes three permanent supportive housing facilities, a homeless shelter for women, a day shelter for women, a medical clinic that provides healthcare for homeless and at-risk patients, and the office for one of the region's largest outreach providers that provides integrated care management and connects people experiencing homelessness with needs including medical care, shelter, mental health, and substance use treatment. See Exhibit 3 on the next page for a map of the area.

This two-block area is an important service hub for many of Seattle's most vulnerable residents. The agencies at this location primarily serve people[4] who are homeless or recently homeless and who have complex needs including physical and mental health challenges, substance use disorder, trauma, victimization, and legal system involvement.

This case study site allowed us to further study the complex issue of fatal overdoses among people who are homeless or recently homeless. In Seattle, fatal overdoses are occurring at a disproportionate rate among people who are homeless or recently homeless. For those living unsheltered or in emergency shelters in King County, including Seattle, fatal overdoses have increased from 59 deaths (12 percent of the total) in 2020 to 316 deaths (24 percent of the total) in 2023.

Although housing is essential for addressing homelessness, new research suggests that housing alone does not sufficiently address overdose risk. Emerging research indicates that individual and environmental risk factors are likely driving high overdose rates in permanent supportive housing (Doran, et al., 2023). This is consistent with Seattle's experience with fatal overdoses in permanent supportive housing. In King County, including Seattle, for people who are recently homeless and living in permanent supportive housing, subsidized housing, or recovery housing, fatal overdoses increased from 73 deaths (14 percent of the total) in 2020 to 279 deaths (21 percent of the total) in 2023.

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[4] The population demographics include individuals who reside at the location as well as individuals who are served at the location. For example, in 2023, among residents of Plymouth Housing's permanent supportive housing (n=146), 95 percent were aged 50 and up; 77 percent were male; 44 percent were Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC); 21 percent reported a developmental disability; 26 percent reported a physical disability; and 61 percent reported mental health issues. Also, in 2023, 81 percent of the total unduplicated clients served at the Harborview Third Avenue Clinic (n =615) were homeless or had unknown housing status. Clients ranged in age from 18 to 96, and the median age was 54. 29 percent of the clients were Black/African American, and 11 percent were Hispanic or Latino/a/x; 51 percent were female, and two percent were nonbinary, genderqueer, or transgender.

Exhibit 3: Audit Case Study Site – Third Avenue from Virginia Street to Blanchard Street

1. Plymouth Housing Sylvia Odom's Place
2. YWCA Opportunity Place
3. Harborview Third Avenue Center (Clinic)
4. YWCA Angeline's Day Center
5. Plymouth Housing Administration Offices
6. Plymouth Housing Langdon & Anne Simons Senior Apartments
7. Evergreen Treatment Services REACH Office

M King County Metro Stop

Source: Office of City Auditor

USE A RESEARCH-INFORMED METHODOLOGY FOR PLACE-BASED PROBLEM SOLVING

Section Summary

Place-based problem solving is useful for both crime prevention and substance use disorder prevention. To effectively address the places in Seattle where overdoses and crime are concentrated, the City of Seattle (City) should follow an established place-based problem-solving methodology, such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Strategic Prevention Framework, and the City should assign a high-level staff person to oversee this work. SAMHSA provides technical support and funding opportunities for communities seeking to use its research-informed problem-solving methodology.

Why Place Matters

Place-based crime prevention efforts are grounded in decades of research, including research specific to Seattle, that shows that crime concentrates at micro-places or "hot spots." Hot spots occur when crime and/or disorder are concentrated in an area such as a street segment, an intersection, or a small cluster of blocks. A study of Seattle found that between 4 and 5 percent of street segments in the city accounted for 50 percent of annual reported crime incidents over a 14-year period.[5]

Crime hot spots occur because the specific local conditions at that place enable crime to concentrate there. One intersection or one block in Seattle does not have the same characteristics as the next block over, nor do they have the same crime problems. Diagnosing and disrupting the unique characteristics that contribute to crime at a hot spot is best accomplished using an established place-based problem-solving approach. As shown in Exhibit 2 earlier in this report, there are certain small geographic areas in the city where crime and overdose events are co-occurring and concentrated, and it would be essential for the City to use a place-based problem-solving methodology in addressing issues there.

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[5] See (Weisburd, Bushway, Lum, & Yang, 2004). Further, a study that examined crime concentrations over time in eight cities (Weisburd, 2015), found strong support for a law of crime concentration. All eight cities experienced crime concentrating within a narrow percentage bandwidth of total street segments; and for the four cities that tracked data longitudinally, these concentrations remained stable over time (Weisburd, 2015).

The City Has Experience Using Place-Based Problem-Solving Methodology in Rainier Beach

Fortunately, the City successfully addressed concentrations of crime in Seattle's Rainier Beach neighborhood by using a place-based problem-solving methodology. In 2011, our office published a report regarding crime hot spots in Seattle and recommended that the City consider addressing these locations using an evidence-based problem-solving framework. Subsequently, the project, Rainier Beach: A Beautiful Safe Place for Youth (RB:ABSPY), was initiated in 2013 and funded until June 2016 through a grant to the City from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance. Since 2016, the City has contributed approximately $500,000 annually toward continued project coordination and interventions, as well as ongoing evaluation by George Mason University.[6]

RB:ABSPY used a systematic problem-solving framework inspired by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Strategic Prevention Framework.[7] After three years of implementation and four waves of data collection, a 2018 evaluation report showed that serious violent crime (e.g., homicide, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery) decreased in the hot spots at a higher rate (30 percent decline) than in the precinct as a whole (26 percent decline) (Gill, Jensen, & Prince, 2018). Another report showed significant longer-term improvements in perceptions of crime rates, collective efficacy, and police satisfaction and legitimacy (Gill, Vitter, & Weisburd, 2016) (Gill, Jensen, & Prince, 2018).[8]

Apart from Rainier Beach, the City has not applied a problem-solving framework to other places. In our 2023 Organized Retail Crime report, we recommended that the City should leverage its experience with place-based approaches to address illegal street markets where stolen goods are fenced, including the 12th and Jackson intersection. The City is just beginning to work on this approach with the place-based community-led crime prevention initiative in Little Saigon. The project, Phố Đẹp (Beautiful Neighborhood), is led by Friends of Little Saigon and community stakeholders in partnership with SPD and other City and government agencies.

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[6] See (Gill & Gross Shader, 2020) (Gill, Vitter, & Weisburd, 2016) (Gill, Jensen, & Prince, 2018)

[7] See SAMHSA Strategic Prevention Technical Assistance Center (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019). In addition, RB:ABSPY also incorporated the Communities That Care prevention science model (Hawkins, et al., 2012) (Hawkins, Oesterle, Brown, Abbott, & Catalano, 2014) (Oesterle, et al., 2018), the SARA model (Eck & Spelman, 1987) and the problem-oriented policing model (Goldstein, 1990) (Hinkle, Weisburd, Telep, & Petersen, 2020) adapted for place-based rather than person-based issues.

[8] See Gill et al. (2016), Gill et al. (2018), Gill et al. (2024).

Strategic Prevention Framework for Substance Use Disorder

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Strategic Prevention Framework (pictured below) is a research-informed comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing the substance misuse and related behavioral health problems facing communities, and to developing and sustaining programs and practices that reduce behavioral health inequities.

The Strategic Prevention Framework Has Five Elements
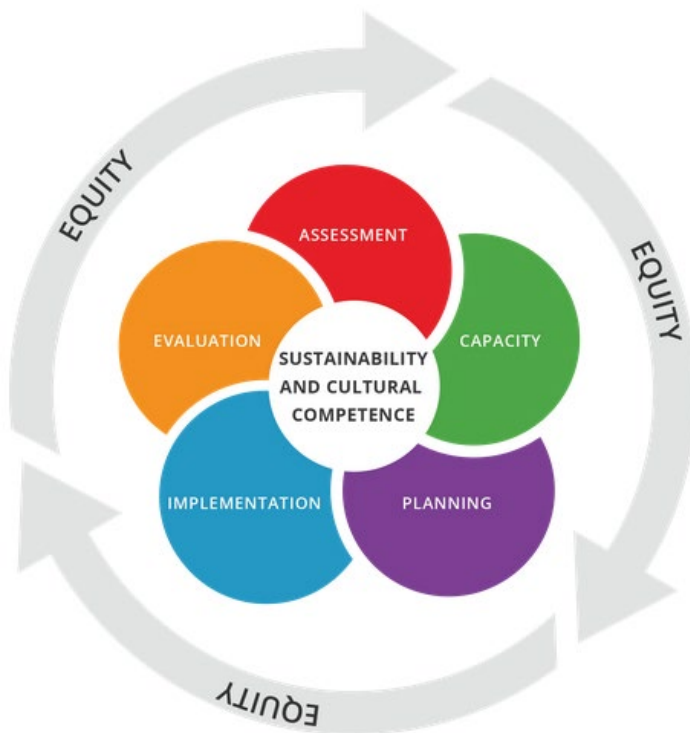
1. Assess needs based on data;
2. Build organizational capacity;
3. Develop a strategic plan;
4. Implement effective evidence-based programs, policies, and practices; and
5. Evaluate efforts for outcomes.

The Strategic Prevention Framework is also guided by two cross-cutting principles that are integrated into all five steps: cultural competence and sustainability. SAMHSA indicates that adherence to the principles in the framework increases the likelihood that prevention efforts will produce anticipated outcomes, reduce harmful behaviors, and keep communities healthier and safer. Evaluation in the SPF involves examining both process and outcomes of programs to enhance prevention practice.

SAMSHA provides technical assistance and funding opportunities for communities looking to implement the Strategic Prevention Framework to address substance use disorder. In addition, the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance's Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program also provides technical assistance and funding opportunities to local communities for building and sustaining multidisciplinary public safety and public health responses to the abuse of illicit substances.

Preliminary Findings from Case Study Site

At our case study site on Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard, we began to connect with the community organizations at the site in fall 2023, convening on-site meetings and walking tours. Following the Strategic Prevention Framework, we began collecting data regarding the overdoses, crime events, and the specific local conditions at the site. This included a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) assessment conducted by SPD (see Appendix F) and a survey of 138 people who live, work, or live and work at the location, including residents of permanent supportive housing. In December 2023, we convened a community task force meeting that included community partner organizations, City staff (e.g., Department of Transportation, Mayor's Office), and other governmental agencies (e.g., King County Metro, NW HIDTA). This initial discussion included identifying other key stakeholders and the most effective ways to better connect with the residents of permanent supportive housing and others, including unhoused people who live or receive services at the site.
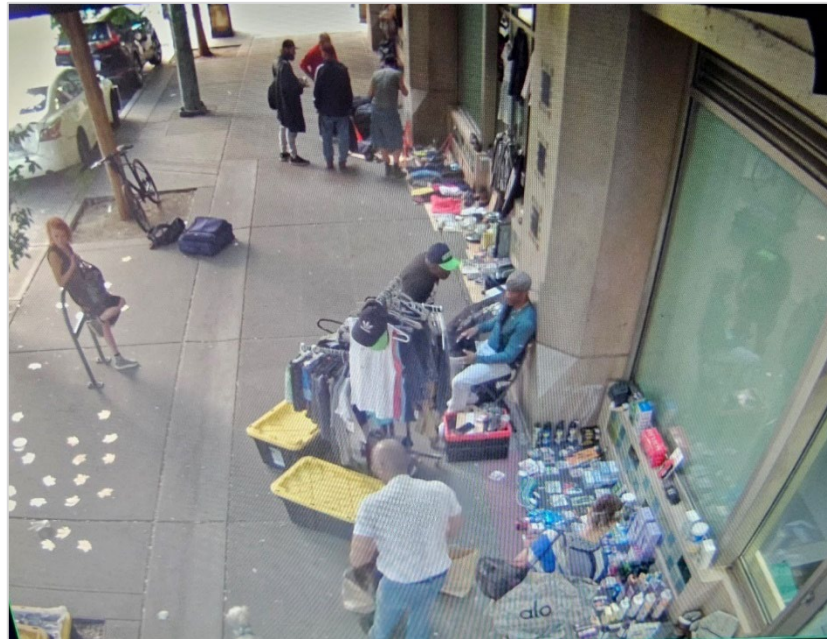
Photo: Near the corner of Third and Virginia, construction scaffolding and a vacant storefront in the YWCA building create a gathering place for illegal street vending and impede pedestrian access.
Source: Harborview Third Avenue Center

Per the Strategic Prevention Framework, we began to link the data on overdoses, crime, and the specific local conditions at the site with evidence-based strategies for preventing crime and overdose. Some initial opportunity areas that emerged from this process included:

- Activating vacant storefronts, including those in buildings owned by YWCA and Plymouth Housing, to increase guardianship.

- Providing more recovery supports, especially for permanent supportive housing residents participating in two pilot programs: Contingency Management for methamphetamine use disorder on-site, and a pilot program to deliver long-lasting Sublocade injections for opioid use disorder.

- Creating a framework for information-sharing and identifying shared values among the community partner organizations and people who live, work, or get services at the site.

In February 2024, we worked with the Mayor's Office, SPD, Plymouth Housing, and the YWCA to apply for a five-year, $1.8 million grant from SAMHSA to extend and strengthen the capacity of local community prevention providers to implement evidence-based prevention programs to help reduce the onset and progression of substance misuse and its related problems. The goals of our proposed approach are to reduce fatal overdoses and improve community safety in the two-block area on Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard.

Appendix G includes a draft of the Year 1 objectives for the grant. This includes 22 specific evidence-based strategies for reducing crime and overdoses at this site. The City will be notified regarding the funding decision in August 2024.

Recommendation 1
The Mayor's Office should lead the City in addressing places where overdoses and crime are concentrated using a proven problem-solving methodology (e.g., the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Strategic Prevention Framework). This should include continuing the problem-solving work on Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard.

Recommendation 2
The Mayor's Office should lead the City in seeking federal technical assistance and funding to address places where overdoses and crime are concentrated.

A High-Level City 'Project Champion' is Needed

The role of a high-level project champion who can convene City department partners and community stakeholder organizations is consistent with the research on what is effective for place-based problem-solving. This role is best suited for a central City agency that has existing authority to convene City departments, such as the Mayor's Office or its designee. In Snohomish County, for example, the county executive directed its Department of Emergency Management to convene and coordinate its Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Group to address the opioid crisis (See next section for more information on the MAC Group).

The City's SAMHSA grant application recognized the need for the City to serve in a convening and coordinating role for the effort. The grant application also recognized that the community partner organizations required additional funding support to participate meaningfully in the work. The application noted, "the heavy demands of the individual organizations' missions currently leave little capacity for coordination and collaboration with the other agencies at the site and with the City government to address the neighborhood conditions."

The grant application named a staff member in the Mayor's Office as the "project champion." This role would oversee the place-based problem-solving effort to address the concentration of overdoses and crime at the site (i.e., Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard) on behalf of the Mayor. The role of project champion includes facilitating information sharing and participation among the City agencies in the project and reporting on its progress to the Mayor and external parties.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor's Office should identify a "project champion" to oversee the City's efforts to address places where overdoses and crime are concentrated.

USE A PROVEN SYSTEM FOR COORDINATION AMONG AGENCIES

Section Summary

Without a systematic approach to coordinating and collaborating among City departments and other government agencies, the City might not be able to effectively address the places where crime and overdose incidents are concentrated. Snohomish County's MAC Group provides one model for a more coordinated approach, and the Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (NW HIDTA) could be a resource to the City for greater coordination with other levels of government.

The City Needs a Coordination System with Clear Objectives and Goals

The City does not currently have a system for coordinating all the City departments, City-funded programs, and other government agencies focused on overdose prevention and crime prevention at locations where these events are concentrated. Our 2019 report on the City's approach to unsanctioned encampments noted a similar lack of coordination for the City's field operations related to unsanctioned encampments and recommended that the City consider implementing some of the components of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) standardized strategic coordination approach.[9] Without a consistent coordinating system, the City might not be able to address overdoses and substance use disorder with the level of urgency or comprehensiveness needed. A coordination system, such as the Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Group[10] used by Snohomish County, could help ensure that the City's investments are well-coordinated[11] and programs have similar objectives and goals.

A coordinating system should also include organizations with which the City has contracts (e.g., homeless services providers). This would allow the City to ensure better compliance with the City contract terms

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[9] FEMA's National Incident Management System (NIMS) provides a consistent nationwide template to enable partners to work together to prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity. FEMA's NIMS Guidebook indicates that "NIMS defines operational systems, including the Incident Command System (ICS), Emergency Operations Center (EOC) structures, and Multiagency Coordination Groups (MAC Groups) that guide how personnel work together during incidents. NIMS applies to all incidents, from traffic accidents to major disasters."

[10] On November 8, 2017, a joint resolution was approved and signed by the Snohomish County Executive, Sheriff, County Council, and Snohomish Health District Board of Health that affirmed their commitment to ending the opioid epidemic in Snohomish County through strong partnerships, coordination, and collaboration. Executive Somers also directed the Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management to partially activate the Emergency Operations Center to support this effort. The multiple agencies and governments in Snohomish County involved in that effort formed an Opioid Response MAC Group. In May 2023, Executive Somers issued a new Executive Directive that reemphasized the County's commitment to an urgent, robust, and collaborative response to the drug crisis and established a new Disaster Policy Group.

[11] Like Snohomish County's MAC Group, the City of San Francisco's multi-agency approach, the Drug Market Agency Coordination Center (DMACC), is also coordinated through their Department of Emergency Management.

and to improve contract terms as necessary. For example, our 2020 audit regarding trash accumulation around unsanctioned encampments found that the "Good Neighbor" provisions in City contracts with service providers did not include language about responsibility for trash accumulation around the facility and that other jurisdictions had "Good Neighbor" provisions that were more specific and robust.

Lessons Learned from Snohomish County MAC Group

In February 2024, members of the Snohomish County MAC Group met with our office and staff from the Mayor's Office to describe their structure and offer lessons learned from their experience with their coordination system to address the opioid crisis. The MAC Group is staffed with two positions from Emergency Management. MAC Group participants include the County Executive Office, County Sheriff, Human Services Department, Public Health Department, the Office of Neighborhoods (OON), and the Snohomish County Outreach Team (SCOUT).

MAC Group leaders indicated that they have been successful with information sharing. The MAC Group includes a multi-disciplinary data collection committee that includes representatives from Snohomish County's Human Services, the Health Department, Fire/Emergency Medical Services agencies, law enforcement agencies, the Medical Examiner's Office, and the Emergency Management Department. This committee provides near real-time data on overdoses and the synthetic drug landscape, including expedited toxicology reports. In 2023, the MAC Group developed a set of common goals and short-term strategies and long-term objectives that provide clarity of direction and accountability for the participating agencies.

In 2023, the MAC Group began doing more to identify and address "hot spots" that require potential intervention. They combined a quantitative Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis of 911 call types and volumes with qualitative feedback from residents and businesses to identify high priority areas. Once they identified the area of highest priority, they established a separate taskforce[12] of agencies and stakeholders to focus solely on that location. Depending on the nature of the location and the work necessary to address the issues, the taskforce has included representatives from several MAC Group participants, the County's Surface Water Management Division, its Solid Waste Division, its Parks Division, the Snohomish Public Utility District, and the Washington State Department of Transportation. Collaboratively, they developed specific strategies to address the site and meet every other week to monitor progress, including physical changes (e.g., reduction in graffiti), need for additional SCOUT and/or OON engagement, ensuring business and community engagement, and vacant space activation.

In response to community input that identified recovery supports as a current gap, the MAC Group is using opioid settlement funds to provide grant funding to community organizations that provide recovery services for people experiencing opioid use disorder in Snohomish County.

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[12] DHS/FEMA defines a task force as, "Any combination of resources of different kinds and/or types assembled to support a specific mission or operational need." Snohomish County successfully modeled the task force for a similar purpose when it deployed "SAFE teams" during its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendation 4

The Mayor's Office, in collaboration with the Office of Emergency Management, Seattle Fire Department, Seattle Police Department, and other stakeholders, should establish a coordination system such as the Multi-Agency Coordination Group. The group should have well-defined objectives, goals, and reporting mechanisms.

Leverage NW HIDTA for Coordination

The Office of National Drug Control Policy's Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (NW HIDTA)[13] has provided our office with technical assistance during this audit, including information on best practices in other jurisdictions, identification of potential funding opportunities, and liaison with other federal agencies. This work has been coordinated out of NW HIDTA's Overdose Response Strategy (ORS) group.

The ORS is implemented by teams made up of drug intelligence officers and public health analysts who work together on drug overdose issues within and across sectors, states, and territories. The mission of the ORS is to help communities reduce fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses by connecting public health and public safety agencies, sharing information, and supporting evidence-based interventions. By sharing information across sectors, the ORS is growing the body of evidence related to early warning signs and prevention strategies.

While SPD is affiliated with NW HIDTA, the City of Seattle had not been working with ORS prior to our office engaging them for this project. The City would benefit from a formalized ongoing relationship with ORS to continue to receive technical assistance resources and coordination with other government agencies.

Recommendation 5

The Mayor's Office should formalize an ongoing City relationship with Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area's Overdose Response Strategy group to continue to leverage its technical assistance resources and coordination with other government agencies.

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[13] Created by Congress in 1988, the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program coordinates and assists federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies to address regional drug threats with the purpose of reducing drug trafficking and drug production in the United States. The HIDTA program oversees 33 regional HIDTAs in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia. With HIDTA presence in over 600 counties across the country, an estimated two-thirds of Americans live in a HIDTA-designated county. Northwest HIDTA was created in 1997 and is responsible for supporting drug prevention, treatment, education, training, and enforcement efforts in Washington state.

USE MULTIPLE DATA SOURCES TO UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM

Section Summary

Analyzing data from multiple sources is necessary to select the right evidence-based, place-based interventions. The City's ability to address places where overdoses and crime are concentrated would be improved by routinely analyzing data on concentrations of crime and overdose and participating in a free national information-sharing platform regarding overdose events.

Data Reveals the Specific Local Conditions That Contribute to the Problems at the Location

The place-based problem-solving process in the Strategic Prevention Framework requires gathering and analyzing data from multiple sources that will help identify the specific local conditions that are contributing to the problems that occur at the location. Understanding the specific local conditions will in turn help identify the evidence-based prevention strategies that are best suited to disrupt the problem behaviors.

For example, it can be important to analyze patterns in the times of day and days of the week. In Rainier Beach, the community task force identified that youth assault victimization was most likely to occur right after school dismissal. That information helped them implement strategies to best address that critical period. In addition to analyzing the data on crimes and overdose events that occur at the sites, it can be helpful to analyze data from other sources including:

- Administrative data from schools or organizations at the site
- Observational data on physical conditions, activity patterns, or transit patterns
- Asset mapping
- Survey data from people who live or use the area
- Demographic data
- Economic data and local business surveys
- Buildings and physical infrastructure

For our audit case study site on Third Avenue, the blocks contain a mix of older office and commercial buildings with newer residential buildings including market-rate apartments and condos and the three permanent supportive housing buildings. The current vacancy rate in this area is 40 percent, nearly triple Seattle's current overall vacancy rate of 14 percent. The vacant street-level commercial spaces in this area reduce the natural guardianship and create opportunities for illegal street markets, drug markets, and unsanctioned tent encampments to form. Third Avenue is a major transportation corridor, and the focus blocks include stops for two King County Metro Transit Rapid Ride bus routes. This stretch of Third Avenue is busy throughout

the day with pedestrians and transit riders. For 2023, annual foot traffic for this two-block area was measured at approximately 278,300. A 2023 Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) report conducted by the Seattle Police Department highlighted the unpredictability of the street environment and the potential for violent disturbances to erupt. It also noted a lack of clear and cohesive signage, physical design features, and culturally relevant features that could welcome people to this location and provide clear guidance on the positive intended uses of the space (see Appendix F).

In January 2024, using the Housing Environment Survey tool, we gathered some preliminary data from 138 people who work or live at the Third Avenue case study site, including permanent supportive housing residents. The survey tool captures various indicators of neighborhood social climate, neighborhood quality, and neighborhood safety as shown in Exhibit 4 below.

Exhibit 4: Preliminary Survey Data for Audit Case Study Site
Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard

I FEEL SAFE IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD

3% 8% 13% 40% 36%

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Disagree or Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
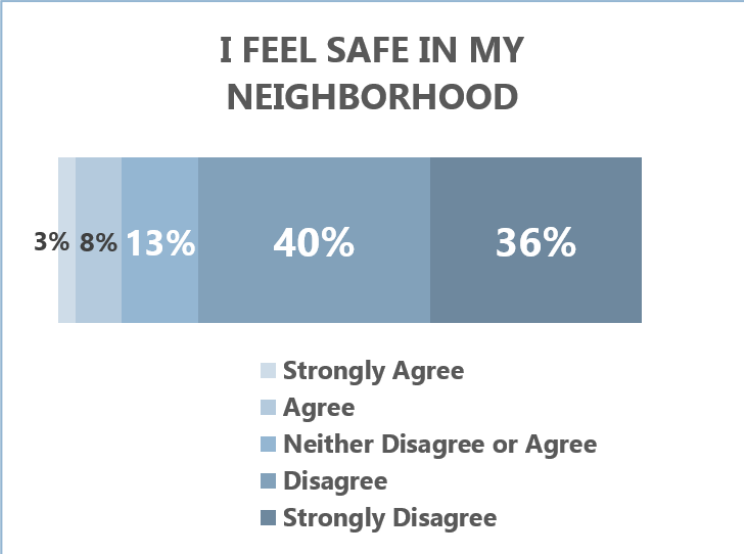
Open-Ended Survey Responses

"Our neighborhood has the potential for so much greatness, yet the level of lawless behavior originating around the YWCA and all the bus stops makes it very unsafe and uninviting."

"I stay inside as much as I can to avoid street crime. I don't feel safe so I stay inside as much as I can."

"The open air selling of stolen merchandise in front of the YWCA building at 3rd and Lenora makes this side of the street unwelcoming and challenging to traverse. The number of people who congregate in front of the Simon House, Plymouth's low-income housing, makes this side of the street unwelcoming and challenging. These examples are on city sidewalks."

Combine Data on Overdoses and Crime at the Location

Before our audit, the City had not conducted joint analysis of crime and overdose data to identify places where these incidents are concentrated.[14] While data staff from SPD and SFD indicated that they are aware of areas where crime and overdose responses are concentrated, the City has not combined these data for a spatial analysis. Identifying places where these events are concentrated could help the City develop tailored place-based solutions. The City could also request and analyze the overdose fatalities data from Public Health – Seattle & King County to better understand the relationship between the overdose response and overdose fatality. Understanding the problem and needs is the first step in the Strategic Prevention Framework.

Free Federal Overdose Mapping and Application Program Could Provide Real-Time Alerts and Information Sharing

The free federal Overdose Mapping and Application Program (ODMAP), developed by the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), is a tool that can provide City decision-makers with near-real-time access to overdose information. The system, which has been used in multiple jurisdictions, has functionalities such as the Spike Alerts that can be set up to notify agencies when the total overdoses in an area exceed a pre-determined threshold. ODMAP can also help facilitate the sharing of data across agencies. As of 2022, over 4,000 government agencies across all 50 states were using ODMAP. However, in 2023, the only agencies in King County participating in ODMAP are the King County Medical Examiner's Office and the Bothell Police Department.
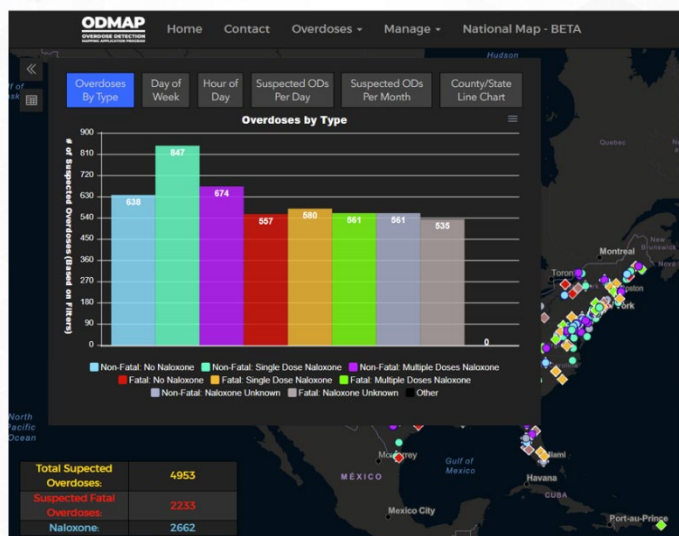
We facilitated a meeting in November 2023 between NW HIDTA and the Mayor's Office to start exploring the implementation of ODMAP for the City. Northwest HIDTA assisted the City with the ODMAP access application and set up an Application Programming Interface (API) that enabled the City to contribute the Seattle Fire Department's overdose response data to ODMAP and utilize the functions of the system. The API connection was finalized in May 2024 and staff in the Mayor's Office now have access to ODMAP. In addition, the City would be able to set up accounts for key partners and overlay other datasets (e.g., crime data) onto ODMAP, which will offer the City greater benefit from the system.

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[14] At our request for this audit, the Seattle Police Department Data-Driven unit analyzed data on crimes against persons and overdose incidents responded to by the Seattle Fire Department from July 2022 to July 2023.

Recommendation 6

The Mayor's Office should lead the City's implementation of the Overdose Mapping and Application Program (ODMAP).

The Mayor's Office implemented this recommendation in May 2024.

Multi-Agency Law Enforcement Task Forces Can Inform Prevention Efforts And Address Site-Specific Conditions

The City is missing opportunities to gather specific information about the circumstances of fatal overdoses at hot spots such as the exact location of the fatal overdoses (e.g., hallway, alley, etc.). This type of specific information would be important for in-depth case reviews and could help inform prevention activities.[15]

The Seattle Police Department does not currently investigate fatal overdoses. Therefore, the City is missing opportunities to gather information about the drug distribution organizations that operate in Seattle's overdose hot spots. This information could help the City address the specific local conditions at the site through investigation, and, in some cases, prosecution. For example, the Portland Police Bureau has noted recent changes in drug dealing with the rise of synthetic drugs, including frequently armed dealers who are not local, carry both tablets and powder, and work in groups.

Other jurisdictions investigate fatal overdoses through multi-agency collaborations. For example, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is partnering with jurisdictions around the country (e.g., San Diego, Denver, Washington D.C.) in task forces to investigate fatal overdoses. In 2018, the DEA in Los Angeles County started investigating opioid-linked deaths in certain hot spots. Subsequently, through partnerships with Los Angeles Sheriff's Department and local law enforcement, they now review all fatal overdoses to determine whether they can make a case. They have developed tools and trainings for patrol officers to help them quickly identify at the overdose scene whether they would be likely to be able to build a case. Since 2018, in LA County, the DEA and local law enforcement have done over 500 case evaluations. Of those, the DEA has initiated cases on 164. And of those, 108 have resulted in federal indictments. About 70 percent of those indictments were resulting from a death under federal drug distribution statute (U.S. Code 21.841(b)(1)(c)) the remaining indictments were related to other federal charges.

In late 2023, San Francisco established a similar task force with personnel from the San Francisco Police Department, the San Francisco District Attorney's Office, the California Highway Patrol, and the California National Guard. The task force will investigate opioid deaths in San Francisco similarly to homicide cases and employ standard operating procedures to document deaths, gather relevant evidence, and process intelligence to further map out the supply of fentanyl and large crime syndicates.

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[15] See the Overdose Fatality Review guidance and case studies. Also, see the evaluation of homicide review report, The Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission: A National Model for Violence Prevention, by the Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice.

Federal funding and support are available for these efforts. For example, the DEA supports the task force in San Diego with Special Agents. Also, in April 2024, Utah set up a statewide task force with funding for local law enforcement provided by the U.S. Department of Justice Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF).

In March 2024, our office convened a meeting with the Mayor's Office, Seattle Police Department, NW HIDTA, the DEA, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office to discuss the possibility of creating a joint law enforcement task force for fatal overdoses in Seattle. The Mayor's Office agreed to take the lead on next steps.

Recommendation 7

The Seattle Police Department, in consultation with the Mayor's Office and federal partners, should explore the establishment of a joint law enforcement task force for fatal overdoses.

SELECT AND IMPLEMENT EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING CRIME AND OVERDOSE

Section Summary

There are various evidence-based strategies that can reduce crime and overdose incidents at locations where they are concentrated. The evidence-based strategies should be carefully selected to address the specific local conditions that are contributing to problems at that location. The City should actively monitor the outcomes of these strategies and adjust to ensure that they are achieving the desired reductions in overdoses and crime.

Evidence-Based Strategies to Reduce Crime at Places

The research on preventing crime at problem places indicates that just as bridge engineers survey the landscape and select a well-tested bridge design that fits the specific needs of the space, public sector practitioners "should understand the crime problem at place before looking for solutions, and then pick solutions that fit" (Eck & Guerette, 2012, p. 368).

Decades of research[16] about place-based crime prevention have identified four groups of evidence-based strategies to prevent crime at place. These place-based crime prevention strategies can also help law enforcement focus on investigating and supporting prosecutions, including drug trafficking and violent crimes:

1. **Increase Guardianship:** Guardians at a place can include staff who are employed to regulate conduct at that location, such as bouncers hired by a bar or nightclub. Guardianship can also be exercised informally by the users of a space, such as shoppers who can easily see from inside the location the activities on the sidewalk or street and would be willing to intervene (e.g., call 911) if needed.

2. **Change the Physical Environment:** This covers a wide range of evidence-based interventions. For example, improving street lighting and remediating vacant lots has strong research evidence for reducing crime at problem places. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)[17] is a discipline that focuses on the physical design of a location to identify and address elements that may have the potential to attract crime.

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[16] See for example (Eck & Guerette, 2012) (Gill, Weisburd, & Vitter, 2013) (Gross Shader, Gill, Zheng, & Carleton, 2024).
[17] SPD has several trained CPTED practitioners who can assess the physical environment and make recommendations. See this description of CPTED on SPD's website. See also this 2023 CPTED report for 12th and Jackson and Appendix F for a CPTED assessment conducted by SPD for the case study site.

3. **Change/Enforce Rules and Policies:** The use of code enforcement teams and civil nuisance abatement procedures can be effective for reducing crimes in certain locations. Similarly, enacting changes to building codes and alcohol licensing policies can also reduce crime in places. There are also opportunities for small policy changes that can make a big difference on crime. For example, in Rainier Beach, community task force members asked Seattle Public Schools to change the dismissal time for one school, and this change immediately coincided with a reduction in after-school assaults among youth. (See more on Rainier Beach below.)

4. **Build Capacity for Community Problem-Solving:** There is strong evidence that sustained community mobilization efforts, even those with other primary goals (e.g., reducing youth substance use) can result in reductions in crime at the places where these efforts are focused. Similarly, the creation of business improvement districts has been associated with reductions in crime.

Evidence-Based Strategies to Reduce Youth Crime and Victimization in Rainier Beach

As part of the problem-solving framework in Rainier Beach, community stakeholders for each of the hot spots used data from multiple sources to analyze the specific local conditions at the hot spot. They then identified interventions within these in four evidence-based broad categories that addressed the specific local conditions at each site. These included:

Photo: Corner Greeters with Rainier Beach: A Beautiful Safe Place for Youth. Source: Annie O'Neill

Increase Guardianship: Safe Passage team, which provides guardianship and helps students get safely to their after-school destinations

Change the Physical Environment: Corner Greeters – pop-up events and activities (e.g., origami, hula-hooping, etc.) led by students from Rainier Beach High School and planned to coincide with typically high-crime days and times in the hot spots

Change/Enforce Rules and Policies: Change in school dismissal time. Implement positive behavior supports and restorative practices to reduce formal discipline actions

Build Capacity for Community Problem-Solving: Business engagement, community town halls

Overdose Prevention Strategies

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has identified four categories of overdose prevention strategies: evidence-based treatment, recovery support, harm reduction, and primary prevention. An appropriate balance of investments in these evidence-based strategies is needed for an effective and efficient response to overdoses and substance use disorder (SUD). An established system of care model, such as the recovery-oriented systems of care, could help the City in identifying and effectively addressing the variety of needs related to SUD. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, recovery-oriented systems of care (ROSCs) are "coordinated systems that provide alternatives to acute care models to address the full range of concerns related to substance use in communities." ROSCs promote interagency and community collaborations to provide a wide spectrum of care and support from primary prevention and intervention to evidence-based treatment and recovery. An example is the Alberta Recovery-Oriented System of Care Model, which adopts a recovery-oriented approach for substance use disorder and mental health.

We included a summary of overdose prevention strategies as Appendix D and are summarized below:

1. **Enhanced Delivery of Evidence-Based Treatment:** Proven treatments for substance use disorders include both pharmacological and behavioral. We reviewed evidence-based resource guides from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to identify strategies with strong evidence of effectiveness in the treatment of substance use disorder. There are three Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved drugs—methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone—that have been proven to be safe and effective in treating opioid use disorder (OUD) in combination with behavioral therapies and psychosocial support.

2. **Recovery Support:** Recovery support includes services that assist individuals in their recovery journey. This is a key strategy in the recovery-oriented systems of care and includes psychosocial support and wraparound human services that enhance stabilization and facilitate recovery and wellness. Offering integrated services that support recovery can lead to better long-term outcomes for people with SUD. Examples of recovery support services are recovery housing, peer recovery support, and job placement programs. (See the callout on next page for example of services at the case study site.)

3. **Integrated Harm Reduction:** The role of evidence-based harm reduction principles and practices in reducing overdoses as a part of the continuum of care is well established. Keeping people who

use drugs alive and as healthy as possible while linking them to care and support is an essential component of overdose prevention framework. According to SAMHSA, harm reduction "emphasizes engaging directly with people who use drugs to prevent overdose and infectious disease transmission; improve physical, mental, and social wellbeing; and offer low barrier options for accessing health care services, including substance use and mental health disorder treatment." We highlighted two leading strategies from SAMHSA and CDC: Opioid Overdose Prevention Education and Naloxone Distribution (OEND) and Linkage to Care Initiatives. The logic model for Linkage to Care Initiatives is included as Appendix E.

4. **Data Monitoring and Primary Prevention:** This involves multidisciplinary prevention activities for substance use disorder that address both the demand and supply sides ranging from population-level strategies to targeted interventions. It also involves early intervention strategies and surveillance efforts, a key component of a public health approach, to understand the changing nature of the drug overdose crisis.

Improved Recovery Supports at Case Study Site

Thanks to a new collaboration between the Recovery Café and We Care Daily Clinics, residents in permanent supportive housing (Plymouth Housing and YWCA) at the audit case study site (Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard) can now receive free transportation to and from Recovery Café in SODO where they can get medication, spend time at Recovery Café in a drug- and alcohol-free space, and participate in programs, trainings, and community building.

Photo: Mosaic workshop at Recovery Café. Source: Recovery Café

Evaluate Outcomes and Adjust

The use of the Strategic Prevention Framework requires an element of evaluation. SAMHSA indicates that the evaluation step has a number of important benefits for communities, including:

- Systematically document and describe the prevention activities
- Meet the diverse information needs of stakeholders and funders
- Continuously improve prevention programs and practices
- Demonstrate the impact of a prevention program or practice on substance misuse and related behavioral health problems
- Identify which elements of a comprehensive prevention plan are working well
- Build credibility and support for effective prevention programs in the community
- Advance the field of prevention by increasing the knowledge base about what works and what does not

Activities to address crime and overdose events where they are concentrated should be monitored, evaluated, and improved based on evaluation findings. Evaluation should be incorporated into any strategies at the beginning of the planning process to ensure that it is well thought out. Evaluation can help ensure program efficiency, and the City should improve and innovate through evaluation, research, and continuous quality improvements.

Recommendation 8

The Mayor's Office should ensure that the City regularly evaluates its efforts to address places where overdoses and crime are concentrated as required by proven problem-solving methodologies (e.g., the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Strategic Prevention Framework).

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives, Scope and Methodology

To accomplish this audit's objective of identifying evidence-informed approaches for addressing areas in the city where crime and overdose incidents are concentrated, we sought and received technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance's Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program (COSSUP) and the Office of National Drug Control Policy's Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (NW HIDTA).

We reviewed research literature on crime prevention and overdose prevention; we analyzed administrative data from Seattle Police Department, Seattle Fire Department, and Public Health – Seattle & King County on crime and overdoses; and we convened collaborative meetings between the City and federal agencies.

For this audit, we also conducted a case study of Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard. For the case study, we organized and participated in site visits and meetings with the following organizations:

- Plymouth Housing
- YWCA Seattle/King/Snohomish
- Harborview Third Avenue Clinic
- Evergreen Treatment Services-REACH
- King County Metro Transit

- Downtown Seattle Association
- Belltown United
- West Precinct Advisory Council
- Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area

This audit was written by Claudia Gross Shader, PhD, and IB Osuntoki, MPH, CIA. We received and incorporated input on this audit from reviewers in the Seattle Police Department, Mayor's Office, Department of Economic Development, Department of Neighborhoods, King County Metro, Belltown United, Plymouth Housing, YWCA, NW HIDTA, and Downtown Seattle Association.

We would especially like to acknowledge Dr. Charlotte Gill of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy, George Mason University, and Dr. Michael McDonnell at the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine, Department of Community and Behavioral Health at Washington State University for their review and comments on a draft of this report.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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APPENDIX A
Mayor's Office Response

From:	Walton-Anderson, Natalie
To:	Myerberg, Andrew; Jones, DavidG; Burgess, Tim
Cc:	Gross-Shader, Claudia; Eder, Dan; Osuntoki, IB; Gerlach, Catherine; Smith, Sarah
Subject:	RE: Andrew/Tim: Executive Response to OD and Crime Audit
Date:	Friday, June 14, 2024 4:23:34 PM
Attachments:	image002.png
	image003.png

David/Claudia,

Thanks for allowing me time to review the draft and respond. I will be designated from the Mayor's Office and Director of Public Safety Director to lead the coordination efforts with the City Auditor related to the Overdose and Crime Concentration Audit report.

Here is a brief statement from the Mayor's Office below to be included in the report:

"The Mayor's Office is appreciative of the research and thoughtful work represented in the recommendations made by the City Auditor in the Overdose and Crime Concentrations Audit report. Many, if not all, of the recommendations call for continued collaboration with other public safety, behavioral health, and community partners, further building on our work to expand treatment options, service connections, and public safety solutions. We look forward to continuing our partnerships and focus on addressing fatal and non-fatal overdoses within our city and region."

Let me know if there is anything else.

Natalie

Natalie Walton-Anderson (she/her/hers)
Director of Public Safety
Office of Mayor Bruce A. Harrell, City of Seattle
206-549-0022 City Mobile
Working together to build *One Seattle*

APPENDIX B
Council President's Response

SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | POSITION 9
COUNCIL PRESIDENT SARA NELSON

The complex and interrelated issues of synthetic drug use, crime, and victimization are taking a significant human and economic toll on Seattle and its people. It is imperative that we act swiftly and thoughtfully, and this audit offers our city a blueprint for positive change.

I thank the Office of City Auditor for its examination of the places in Seattle where overdoses and crime are concentrated and its recommendation that the City use a systematic, coordinated, evidence-based approach to tackle these issues. Since taking office in 2022, I've been laser focused on public safety issues and expanding access to on-demand comprehensive substance use disorder treatment. As President of the City Council, I will work to implement the audit's recommendations legislatively and through collaborative leadership with Mayor Harrell's administration and external stakeholders.

The audit notes that because the landscape of drug use in Seattle is rapidly evolving, our existing strategies to address its impacts must be rethought and recalibrated to meet current conditions more effectively. Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid 50 times more potent than heroin, is driving an exponential increase in addiction and overdose fatalities, making the drug crisis playing out on the streets of Seattle our most devastating public health emergency in generations.

According to Public Health Seattle & King County's 2022 Overdose Death Report, "(b)etween 2012 and 2019, the number of overdoses that occurred in King County increased by about 6% each year. ... Since 2019, the number of overdose deaths has grown on an exponential scale, jumping by 20% between 2019 and 2020 and jumping by an additional 39% between 2020 and 2021" and fentanyl was involved in 70% of all confirmed overdose deaths that occurred by its publication date of October 15, 2022. According to the King County Overdose Dashboard, there was a 33 percent increase in overdose fatalities from 2022 to 2023 (1,008 to 1,339 respectively). These trends reveal the limitations of relying on our current harm reduction approach to address a drug that is so cheap, ubiquitous, and deadly.

Furthermore, findings from a case study presented in the audit suggest that modifying our current low-barrier, housing first model for city-funded affordable housing projects may be appropriate. Out of the 11 overdoses that occurred on a segment of Third Avenue during the case study, "data from the King County Medical Examiner's Office indicates 10 of the 11 fatal overdoses (91 percent) occurred in or outside of the three permanent supportive housing buildings." And the widespread availability of drugs within and outside affordable housing hampers efforts of people trying to recover from addiction which indicates the need for more recovery-based services.

By using a place-based framework to map the overlapping concentrations of overdose and crime, the audit confirms what is obvious to many: that today's drug crisis is fueling property and violent crime and is inextricably linked to the persistence of chronic homelessness across the region and beyond.

We need not start from scratch to better tackle these interrelated problems. This audit identifies existing resources and evidence-based strategies that have proved effective in other jurisdictions. and it draws on research conducted by the Office of City Auditor informing the recommendations in previous audits on the City's response to Unsanctioned Encampments (2020), Methamphetamine Use Disorder (2022), and Organized Retail Crime (2023). Among the specific actions that we can and should implement right now are:

- Adopt the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) place-based Strategic Prevention Framework to address crime and overdose hot spots.
- Use Snohomish County's Multi-Agency Coordination Group as a model framework for coordinating City agencies in a unified approach.
- Examine our current contracts with provider agencies and ensure they are meeting the "Good Neighbor" provisions.
- The Mayor's Office just recently joined the federal Overdose Mapping and Application Program, and we must now develop a coordinated plan for using that data in response to overdose spikes.
- Take the DEA and the U.S. Attorney up on their offer to help Seattle investigate and prosecute fatal overdoses as they do in many other jurisdictions including Los Angeles and San Diego.
- Engage in continuous evaluation of our efforts to best ensure that the new strategies and approaches the City adopts avoid unintentionally creating harm.

In sum, we know what we must do, so I urge the Executive and my Council colleagues to act quickly and collaboratively to implement these recommendations in order to improve the lives of everyone who lives, works, or visits the places in Seattle where overdose and crime are currently concentrated.

Sara Nelson, President
Seattle City Council

APPENDIX C
List of Recommendations and Department Response

Recommendation 1:

The Mayor's Office should lead the City in addressing places where overdoses and crime are concentrated using a proven problem-solving methodology (e.g., the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Strategic Prevention Framework). This should include continuing the problem-solving work on Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard.

Mayor's Office Concurrence: **Concur**

Recommendation 2:

The Mayor's Office should lead the City in seeking federal technical assistance and funding to address places where overdoses and crime are concentrated.

Mayor's Office Concurrence: **Concur**

Recommendation 3:

The Mayor's Office should identify a "project champion" to oversee the City's efforts to address places where overdoses and crime are concentrated.

Mayor's Office Concurrence: **Concur**

Recommendation 4:

The Mayor's Office, in collaboration with the Office of Emergency Management, Seattle Fire Department, Seattle Police Department, and other stakeholders, should establish a coordination system such as the Multi-Agency Coordination Group. The group should have well-defined objectives, goals, and reporting mechanisms.

Mayor's Office Concurrence: **Concur**

Recommendation 5:

The Mayor's Office should formalize an ongoing City relationship with Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area's Overdose Response Strategy group to continue to leverage its technical assistance resources and coordination with other government agencies.

Mayor's Office Concurrence: **Concur**

Recommendation 6:

The Mayor's Office should lead the City's implementation of the Overdose Mapping and Application Program (ODMAP).

Mayor's Office Concurrence: **Concur, Implemented May 2024**

Recommendation 7:

The Seattle Police Department, in consultation with the Mayor's Office and federal partners, should explore the establishment of a joint law enforcement task force for fatal overdoses.

Seattle Police Department Concurrence: **Concur**

Recommendation 8:

The Mayor's Office should ensure that the City regularly evaluates its efforts to address places where overdoses and crime are concentrated as required by proven problem-solving methodologies (e.g., the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Strategic Prevention Framework).

Mayor's Office Concurrence: **Concur**

APPENDIX D
Overdose Prevention Strategies

The strategies described below are not an exhaustive list of strategies to prevent overdoses and substance use disorder but are meant as a reference for decision-makers on evidence-based practices that could be implemented in the City of Seattle.

Enhanced Delivery of Evidence-Based Treatment

Treatment Category	Methadone	Buprenorphine	Naltrexone	Contingency Management (CM)	Community Reinforcement Approach (CRA)
Overview	Methadone is the most used medication to treat opioid use disorder (OUD) in the world. There is abundant evidence that show its effectiveness in reducing illicit opioid use, treats OUD, and retains patients in treatment.	Buprenorphine is a medication used to treat OUD and it is available in multiple routes of administration including sublingual film, buccal tablet, injection, and subdermal implants. It has been shown to be effective in retaining patients in treatment and reducing illicit opioid use.	Naltrexone is one of the three FDA-approved medications for the treatment of opioid dependence. Randomized controlled trials has shown its efficacy in reducing return to illicit opioid use, increasing treatment retention, and reducing opioid craving.	CM is a type of behavioral therapy grounded in the principles of operant conditioning. Operant conditioning is a method of learning in which desired behaviors are reinforced with prizes, privileges, or cash.	CRA is commonly used with CM and includes multiple elements such as analyzing clients' substance use, relationship counseling, vocational guidance, and job skills training. CRA therapy also focuses on building social and drug refusal skills.
Used for	Opioid use disorder	Opioid use disorder	Opioid and alcohol use disorders	Opioid and stimulant use disorders	Opioid and stimulant use disorders
Effectiveness	Reduces opioid cravings, illicit opioid use, risk of opioid overdose, and increases rate of treatment retention	Reduces opioid cravings, illicit opioid use, risk of opioid overdose, and increases rate of treatment retention	Reduces opioid cravings, illicit opioid use, and increases rate of treatment retention. Prevents return to opioid use after release from controlled environments	Reduces number of days of stimulant use, stimulant cravings, new stimulant use, and HIV risk behaviors	Reduces number of weeks of drug usage, frequency of use, and addiction severity
Available in Outpatient/ Community Settings	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Available through	Opioid treatment program	Any prescriber with the appropriate waiver	Any healthcare provider with prescribing authority	Behavioral therapy and social services programs	Behavioral therapy and social services programs

Treatment Category	Methadone	Buprenorphine	Naltrexone	Contingency Management (CM)	Community Reinforcement Approach (CRA)
Route of Administration	Pill, liquid, and water forms	• Pill, sublingual film • Extended-release injectable • Implant (inserted beneath the skin)	• Oral • Extended-release injectable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Dosing frequency	Daily	• Daily • Monthly • Every six months	• Daily • Monthly	Not applicable	Not applicable
Combination with other treatment	Recommended in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies	Recommended in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies	Recommended in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies	Use in combination with pharmacological treatment	Used in combination with CM
Duration of Treatment	No maximum recommended duration, treatment may continue indefinitely	No maximum recommended duration, treatment may continue indefinitely	No maximum recommended duration, treatment may continue indefinitely	No prescribed time period, typically follow 12-week schedule	24-week schedule recommended
Opportunities for Low Barrier Treatment	• Mobile clinics	• Mobile clinics • Permanent supportive housing • Emergency Medical Services/ Overdose Response Team • Controlled environments	• Mobile clinics • Permanent supportive housing • Controlled environments (e.g., jails, prisons, residential rehabilitation programs)	• Mobile clinics • Permanent supportive housing	• Mobile clinics • Permanent supportive housing
Washington State Institute for Public Policy's (WSIPP) Benefit-Cost Result	Every dollar spent on a program participant generates $2.40 in gross benefit.	Every dollar spent on a program participant generates $1.85 in gross benefit.	Every dollar spent on a program (injectable for opiates) participant generates a negative $0.04 in gross benefit. However, WSIPP analysis assumes a duration of one full year of	Every dollar spent on the program generates $39.74 in gross benefit (for programs with high value contingencies) or $11.67 in gross benefit (for programs with lower value contingencies).	Every dollar spent on a program participant generates $7.62 in gross benefit.

Treatment Category	Methadone	Buprenorphine	Naltrexone	Contingency Management (CM)	Community Reinforcement Approach (CRA)
			treatment and one corresponding full year of effectiveness, which is not evidence-based.		

Sources: The Pew Charitable Trusts; US Food & Drug Administration; SAMHSA Medications for Opioid Use Disorder; SAMHSA Treatment of Stimulant Use Disorders; Evidence-Based Strategies for Preventing Opioid Overdose: What's Working in the United States; Washington State Institute for Public Policy;

Recovery Support

Strategy Category	Recovery Housing	Peer Recovery Support	Job Placement Programs
Overview	Recovery housing is a type of recovery supports service designed for those initiating and sustaining recovery from SUD. The recovery housing setting is the service been provided and recovery homes mindfully cultivate prosocial bonds, a sense of community, and a supportive social environment for recovery.	Peer recovery support is a range of activities between people who share similar experiences of SUD. Peer recovery support can vary depending on the program or setting and peer support workers can provide a wide range of services which include helping others develop personal goals and supporting them across the continuum of recovery.	Job placement programs for people with SUD or dual diagnosis help individuals work in jobs of their choosing. This includes evidence-based interventions like the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and its variant, the customized employment supports (CES).
Effectiveness	Recovery housing has been associated with positive outcomes for residents including decreased substance use, reduced likelihood of return to use, lower rates of incarceration, higher income, increased employment, and improved family relationships.	There is developing evidence that the inclusion of standardized peer support programs in treatment and recovery services is beneficial as shown by positive findings on measures including reduced substance use and SUD relapse rates, improved relationships with treatment providers and social supports, increased treatment retention, and greater treatment satisfaction.	According to meta-analyses and systematic reviews, IPS is the only evidence-based employment intervention for adults with behavioral health conditions. IPS has been shown to increase competitive integrated employment compared to usual services in an opioid treatment program.

Strategy Category	Recovery Housing	Peer Recovery Support	Job Placement Programs
Types	The National Alliance for Recovery Residences has four levels of housing with different levels of support. • Level 1 (e.g., Oxford Houses) • Level 2 (e.g., sober living homes) • Level 3 (e.g., with standardized peer recovery support services) • Level 4 (e.g., therapeutic community)	There are different types of peer-based positions/programs including peer navigator, peer specialist, recovery specialist, recovery coach, peer practitioner, etc.	IPS offers supported education and technical skills that help individuals consider and pursue the training needed to achieve their work goals. Some programs also refer individuals to other organizations to help them meet their educational goals.
Washington State Institute for Public Policy's Benefit-Cost Result	Every dollar spent on a participant in sober living houses generates $6.50 in gross benefit.	Every dollar spent on a program participant generates $1.22 in gross benefit.	Not Available

Sources: SAMHSA Best Practices for Recovery Housing; Peer Recovery Supports; Substance Use Disorders Recovery with a Focus on Employment | SAMHSA Publications and Digital Products; U.S. Department of Labor Individual Placement and Support for People with Co-Occurring SUD(dol.gov); Washington State Institute for Public Policy;

Integrated Harm Reduction

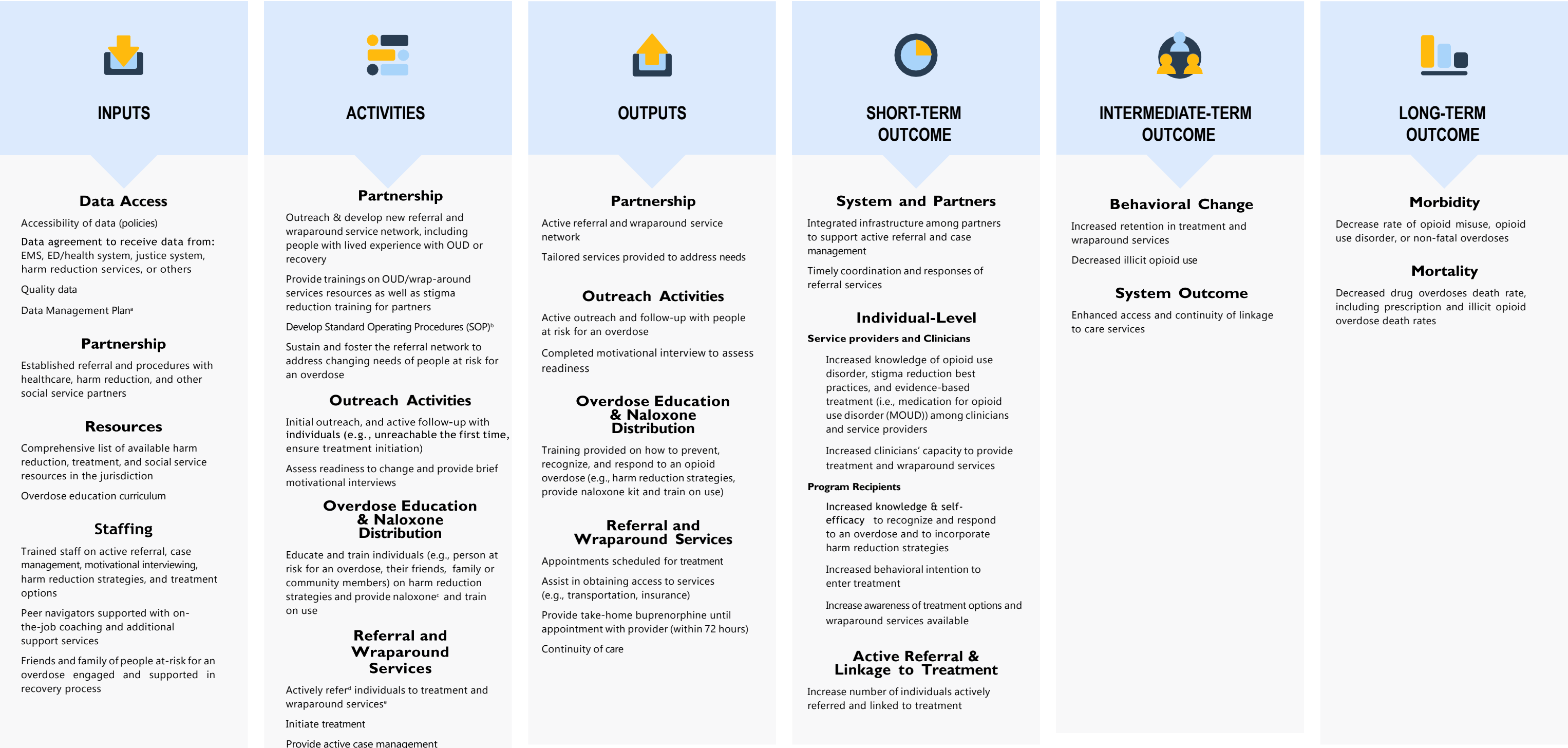| Strategy Category	Opioid Overdose Prevention Education and Naloxone Distribution (OEND)	Linkage to Care Initiative
Overview	OEND is the distribution of overdose prevention and response education and naloxone rescue kits to people at high risk of overdosing. It could involve the proactive distribution to high-risk population and their social network or referring people to where such education and kits are available. There are multiple implementation strategies and sites for OEND programs including targeted naloxone distribution, distribution in treatment centers and criminal legal settings, "leave-behind" programs at sites of overdose, acute care/emergency department and primary care settings, and syringe service programs.	Linkage to care initiatives is a framework for coordinating care and services for people with OUD with core components of partnership development and sustainability; outreach activities and active follow-up; OEND; and active referral and wraparound services. It involves using non-fatal overdose and other data from different data sources to identify people who are at risk for overdose or have recently experienced a non-fatal overdose (i.e., program recipients) and link them with evidence-based treatment options and wraparound services (e.g., transportation to treatment, housing assistance, etc.)

Strategy Category	Opioid Overdose Prevention Education and Naloxone Distribution (OEND)	Linkage to Care Initiative
Effectiveness	Research shows that naloxone administration increases the odds of survival during an overdose and that communities enrolled in OEND programs distributing directly to people who use drugs had lower rates of opioid overdose deaths.	Linkage to care strategies have been proven to be effective in the initiation of medications for opioid use disorder treatment and engagement with peer support programs.

Sources: CDC Evidence-Based Strategies for Preventing Opioid Overdose: What's Working in the United States; SAMHSA Opioid-Overdose Reduction Continuum of Care Approach; CDC Linkage to Care Initiative; SAMHSA Harm Reduction | SAMHSA; CDC Linkage to Care Resource for Action

Data Monitoring and Primary Prevention

Strategy Category	Overview
Data Monitoring Programs	As we discussed on page 20, the City needs a data monitoring tool to be able to assess and analyze overdose data. Data monitoring is an important component in understanding the complex and changing nature of drug overdose. Accurate, comprehensive, and timely data on fatal and nonfatal overdoses can enhance prevention programmatic efforts. The City could use the free HIDTA's ODMAP as its data monitoring tool for identification of overdose spikes, automatic alert messaging to local stakeholders and community partners, post-overdose follow-up for care coordination, and targeting deployment of harm reduction services.
Prevention and Early Intervention Strategies	There are multiple evidence-based prevention and early intervention strategies that can be implemented in various settings. These strategies include universal programs, targeted programs for youth and young adults, and indicated programs that boost protective factors and eliminate or reduce risk factors for substance use disorder. SAMHSA's Focus on Prevention identified six broad strategies that can be used with the Strategic Prevention Framework to help communities shape their prevention plans. The combination of these strategies can improve their desired results. • Information dissemination • Prevention education • Positive alternatives • Environmental strategies • Community-based and school-based processes • Identification of problems and referral to services

Sources: SAMHSA Focus on Prevention; National Institute on Drug Abuse Preventing Drug Misuse and Addiction: The Best Strategy; CDC's Overdose Data to Action

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOME	INTERMEDIATE-TERM OUTCOME	LONG-TERM OUTCOME

INPUTS

Data Access

Accessibility of data (policies)

Data agreement to receive data from: EMS, ED/health system, justice system, harm reduction services, or others

Quality data

Data Management Plan[a]

Partnership

Established referral and procedures with healthcare, harm reduction, and other social service partners

Resources

Comprehensive list of available harm reduction, treatment, and social service resources in the jurisdiction

Overdose education curriculum

Staffing

Trained staff on active referral, case management, motivational interviewing, harm reduction strategies, and treatment options

Peer navigators supported with on-the-job coaching and additional support services

Friends and family of people at-risk for an overdose engaged and supported in recovery process

ACTIVITIES

Partnership

Outreach & develop new referral and wraparound service network, including people with lived experience with OUD or recovery

Provide trainings on OUD/wrap-around services resources as well as stigma reduction training for partners

Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)[b]

Sustain and foster the referral network to address changing needs of people at risk for an overdose

Outreach Activities

Initial outreach, and active follow-up with individuals (e.g., unreachable the first time, ensure treatment initiation)

Assess readiness to change and provide brief motivational interviews

Overdose Education & Naloxone Distribution

Educate and train individuals (e.g., person at risk for an overdose, their friends, family or community members) on harm reduction strategies and provide naloxone[c] and train on use

Referral and Wraparound Services

Actively refer[d] individuals to treatment and wraparound services[e]

Initiate treatment

Provide active case management

OUTPUTS

Partnership

Active referral and wraparound service network

Tailored services provided to address needs

Outreach Activities

Active outreach and follow-up with people at risk for an overdose

Completed motivational interview to assess readiness

Overdose Education & Naloxone Distribution

Training provided on how to prevent, recognize, and respond to an opioid overdose (e.g., harm reduction strategies, provide naloxone kit and train on use)

Referral and Wraparound Services

Appointments scheduled for treatment

Assist in obtaining access to services (e.g., transportation, insurance)

Provide take-home buprenorphine until appointment with provider (within 72 hours)

Continuity of care

SHORT-TERM OUTCOME

System and Partners

Integrated infrastructure among partners to support active referral and case management

Timely coordination and responses of referral services

Individual-Level

Service providers and Clinicians

Increased knowledge of opioid use disorder, stigma reduction best practices, and evidence-based treatment (i.e., medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD)) among clinicians and service providers

Increased clinicians' capacity to provide treatment and wraparound services

Program Recipients

Increased knowledge & self-efficacy to recognize and respond to an overdose and to incorporate harm reduction strategies

Increased behavioral intention to enter treatment

Increase awareness of treatment options and wraparound services available

Active Referral & Linkage to Treatment

Increase number of individuals actively referred and linked to treatment

INTERMEDIATE-TERM OUTCOME

Behavioral Change

Increased retention in treatment and wraparound services

Decreased illicit opioid use

System Outcome

Enhanced access and continuity of linkage to care services

LONG-TERM OUTCOME

Morbidity

Decrease rate of opioid misuse, opioid use disorder, or non-fatal overdoses

Mortality

Decreased drug overdoses death rate, including prescription and illicit opioid overdose death rates

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[a] CDC requires recipients who collect or generate data with federal funds to develop, submit, and comply with a data management plan (DMP) for each collection or generation of public health data undertaken as part of the award and, to the extent appropriate, provide access to and archiving/long-term preservation of collected or generated data. For more information please see CDC's DMP policy.

[b] SOP should include considerations about screening, development of an individualized plan, and who does the linkage. This should be developed in conjunction with a clinician or addiction specialist in decisions about appropriate care.

[c] The purchase of naloxone is prohibited with CDC's OD2A funds.

[d] Active referral includes directing clients to a service, such as making appointments; providing transportation; providing a "warm hand-off"; or using a peer navigator.

[e] Wraparound services may include arranging for transportation to treatment; assistance with insurance sign-up; securing appointments; HIV/Hep C testing; housing assistance; employment services; and others.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

APPENDIX F
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Report

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) "Snapshot" Summary: 3rd Ave Virginia to Blanchard (2000-2100 block)

December 2023

Final Draft

Prepared by: Barb Biondo, Seattle Police West Precinct Crime Prevention Coordinator
Barbara.Biondo@seattle.gov **/ 206.233.0015**

The following **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design** "Snapshot" Summary for **3rd Ave: Virginia-Blanchard (2000-2100 block)** was prepared to provide initial guidance for local government and community stakeholders on CPTED-based strategies that can reduce opportunities for crime to occur and create a safer environment. This report is provided in support of a case study being conducted by the Office of the Seattle City Auditor "… to identify and document evidence-informed place-based interventions for reducing substance use disorder-related crime, disorder, and overdose incidents among people using drugs in areas with high levels of concentrated crime to address escalating drug overdoses, fatalities, crime, and victimization." This CPTED Summary is provided as a public service of the Seattle Police Department and is based on CPTED observations and discussion with stakeholders on site: October 25 (daylight), and November 20 (dark).

CPTED Practitioners Present: Barb Biondo, Crime Prevention Coordinator, Seattle Police West Precinct

Disclaimer: This survey is intended to assist in improving the overall level of safety and is not intended to imply the existing security measures or proposed crime prevention approaches are absolute or perfect.

Confidentiality: All information sent to and from the Seattle Police Department is subject to the Washington Public Records Act, Chapter 42.56 RCW, and may be subject to disclosure to a third-party requestor.

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Site Description

The focus blocks 2000-2100 of Third Ave which are in south end of the Belltown neighborhood, fall within two Seattle Police West Precinct patrol beats: Mary 1 and David 1. The blocks contain a mix of early Twentieth Century office - commercial buildings with newer residential buildings, ranging from luxury apartments to permanent supportive housing, some of which is dedicated to housing vulnerable

members of our society. Other land uses in the focus area include the YWCA Opportunity Place which provides a range of services for women including a day center, overnight shelter and permanent housing, and the headquarters for ETS Reach, the region's largest provider of outreach and case management services connecting those in need to housing and treatment for substance use disorder or mental/behavioral health issues. A high-rise condominium building is under construction on the southeast corner of 3rd and Virginia with scaffolding that narrows the pedestrian pathway.

Third Ave is a major transportation corridor[18] – the focus blocks include King County Metro Transit / Rapid Ride stops # 420 and #600. While this stretch of 3rd Ave is busy throughout the day with pedestrians and transit riders, Amazon's return-to-office policy, with campus located three blocks east, has likely added to the pedestrian and transit riders frequenting the area, though the overall volume of pedestrian traffic has likely impacted by closures of neighboring retailers, shuttered prior to or during the COVID 19 pandemic - Macy's, Bed, Bath & Beyond, Bergman Luggage.

Adjacent alleyways were not included in this CPTED summary.

Observed activity pattern: In addition to pedestrians and transit riders, individuals and groups were observed socializing outside YWCA's Opportunity Place on the east side of 3rd Ave and in front of Plymouth Housing Simon's Apartments on the west side of street. Also observed were several unpermitted street venders in the corner created by construction scaffolding which creates a nook on the public sidewalk where, removed from the flow of pedestrian traffic, black market venders set up shop, selling alcohol, shoes, clothing, and miscellaneous wares in front of a vacant storefront. People gathering in this area at times created a small crowd, leaving pedestrians the challenge of navigating a path through or around the group to pass or catch their bus. During one visit, yelling signaled an assault had just taken place and required police intervention, highlighting the unpredictability of the street environment and potential for violent disturbances to erupt.

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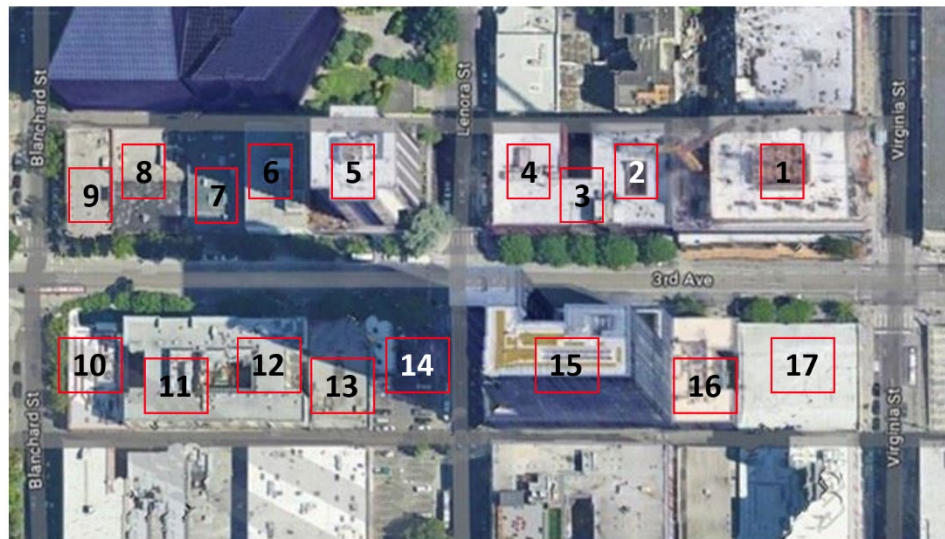
[18] Pre-pandemic, the 3rd Ave corridor was the primary transit corridor for downtown Seattle and one of the busiest transit corridors in the US serving roughly 2,500 busses and 100,000 riders per day. King County Metro Transit reports average weekday ridership is 61% of pre-pandemic ridership and is hitting 80% of pre-pandemic ridership, with a dozen routes seeing higher ridership than pre-pandemic.

Land Use-West side of 3rd Ave (As identified in modified Google Earth map, above):

1. 2000 3rd Ave: Multi-family high-rise mixed-use building under construction, 459 units, estimated completion in 2024; First Light Seattle
2. 2024 3rd Ave: YWCA Opportunity Place 145 units permanent supportive housing, Work Source Center and Homelessness Employment center for women; 1 ground-level commercial space unoccupied* Asset Map
3. 2028 3rd Ave Harborview Third Ave Center acute and primary care, social services support for downtown residents *Asset Map
4. 2030 3rd Ave Angeline's Day Center services for women including meals, laundry, hygiene and storage and Overnight Shelter 55 beds, case management. Ground level commercial space occupied by Subway *Asset Map
5. 2100 3rd Ave: Multi-family high-rise, Royal Crest Condominium 132 units with 4 commercial ground level units
6. 2112 3rd Ave: Vacant commercial office building with parking, 4 units
7. 2118 3rd Ave: Commercial Office building occupied Skanska Construction
8. 2124 3rd Ave: Commercial Office Building occupied by Swenson, Say, Faget Engineering and Johnson Architecture and Planning
9. 2132 3rd Ave: Commercial Office Building occupied by Knack Co-Working

Land Use-East side of 3rd Ave:

10. 2133 3rd Ave: Evergreen Treatment Services REACH Office- outreach and case management support for people experiencing homelessness, substance use, and mental health treatment. Also, LEAD (Let Everyone Advance with Dignity)
11. 2119 3rd Ave: Multifamily building Plymouth Housing Langdon & Anne Simons Senior Apartments, 95 apartments for seniors and veterans ages 55+
12. 2113 3rd Ave: Plymouth Housing Administrative building with ground-level commercial space (vacant)
13. 2107 3rd Ave: Army Building office/retail – Coastline Church on ground floor.
14. 2103 3rd Ave: Retail – Coffee Tab - not-for-profit café with training and employment opportunities for local youth/surface parking lot managed by Diamond Parking
15. 2031 3rd Ave: Multi-family high-rise, The Modern 221 units with office and vacant commercial ground-level units
16. 2017 3rd Ave: Multifamily building Plymouth Housing Sylvia Odom's Place Apartments, 65 apartments for independent adults and vacant ground level
17. 2001 3rd Ave: Commercial building housing Swifty Printing

Other Nearby Land Use:

Moore Theatre: 1932 2nd Ave - Historic and recently renovated music and theatre performance venue
Holocaust Center for Humanity: 2045 2nd Ave - Center provides support for continued teaching and honoring the history, stories, and lessons of the Holocaust
WA Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Belltown Center: 2106 2nd Ave – Provides the following services: Food, cash, medical benefits; Working Connections, Childcare services. Public computers in office lobbies for DSHS-related services
King County Downtown Public Health Center: 2124 4th Ave - Medical/Dental clinic, Women Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program, health screening for newly arrived immigrants, needle exchange and low barrier buprenorphine clinic for treatment of Opioid Use Disorder
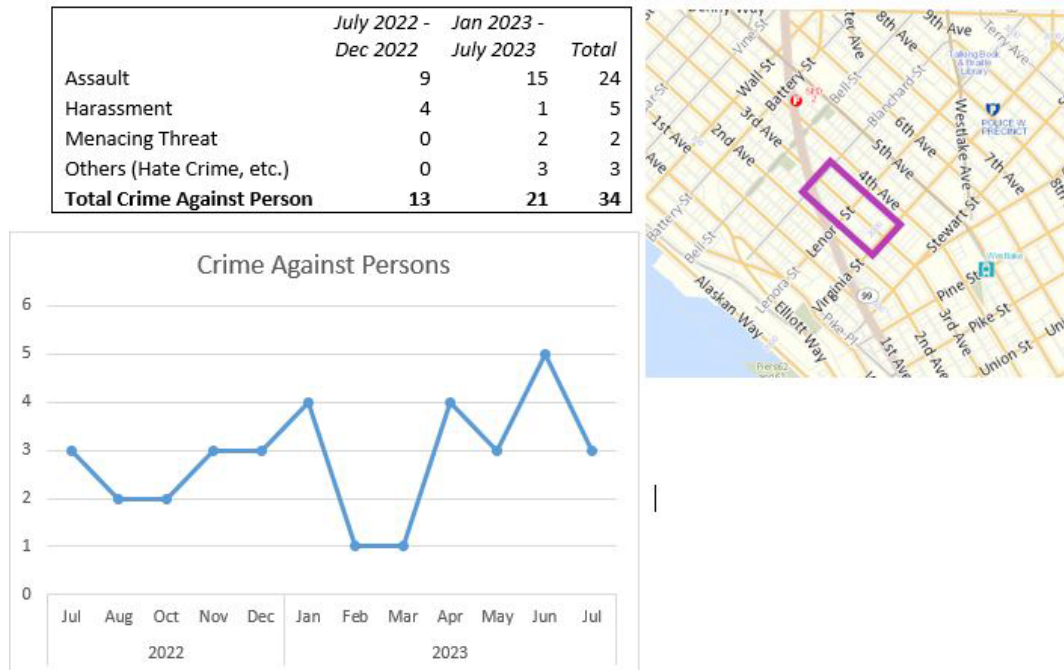
Crime Data Snapshot:

	July 2022 - Dec 2022	Jan 2023 - July 2023	Total
Assault	9	15	24
Harassment	4	1	5
Menacing Threat	0	2	2
Others (Hate Crime, etc.)	0	3	3
Total Crime Against Person	**13**	**21**	**34**

Figure 1: Source - Office of City Auditor analysis of publicly available from the Seattle Police Department's Crime Database. *The Crime Against Person analysis was based on distinct count of Reporting Event Number and do not represent the total number of victims.

For a snapshot look at crime in the focus area, the crime data above shows the fluctuation in crime against persons over a 13-month period. Crime data can be influenced by many factors over time, including police emphasis efforts, the motivation of surrounding area to report crime and changes in the surrounding area.

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CPTED Overview

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a place-based and multi-disciplinary approach to crime prevention through the proper design and effective use of the built environment. CPTED focuses on the design of (or modifications to) the physical environment to reduce crime, increase a sense of safety and improve the quality of life. When proper design is implemented, the offender's perceived risk of being caught will outweigh the value of the reward. Researchers have found a diffusion of crime control benefits to the surrounding areas from applying place-based crime prevention and deterrence strategies. The five guiding CPTED principals are:

1. **Natural Surveillance:** Natural Surveillance is a design concept that promotes the ability to see and be seen. Natural Surveillance is promoted by features that maximize visibility of people in public areas such as parking lots, building entrances, lobby areas, and restroom access points: doors and windows that look out onto streets and parking areas, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and streets, front porches, adequate nighttime lighting all support Natural Surveillance.

2. **Territorial Reinforcement:** This concept uses physical design to provide clear guidance on what the intended (positive) uses are as well as features that signal to potential offenders' predictable consequences for inappropriate (negative) uses. Territorial reinforcement is promoted by features

that declare who a space is managed by, defines property lines, and distinguishes private from public spaces using the landscape, pavement design, entryway treatments, and "CPTED" fences (fencing that provides unrestricted lines of sight).

3. **Natural Access Control:** This concept decreases the opportunity for crime to occur by denying access to crime targets and by creating a perception of risk. Natural Access Control is gained by designing streets, sidewalks, building entrances, and neighborhood gateways to clearly indicate public routes. Access to private areas is discouraged through the use of structural elements.

4. **Image and Maintenance:** Care and maintenance serves as an expression of ownership and supports the use of a space for its intended purpose. Deteriorated structures, accumulated litter, graffiti, and abandoned property indicate less control by place managers and signals tolerance of disorder. Well-maintained, clean places promote a positive image, inviting positive uses and discouraging negative use.

5. **Community Activation:** Where the first four CPTED strategies focus on the design of or modifications to the physical environment to reduce opportunities for crime and increase a sense of safety, Community Activation recognizes that the involvement and support of the people who use and have connections to the place is essential to creating and maintaining safe spaces.

Complimentary crime prevention strategies often recommended in conjunction with CPTED approaches include:

- **Lighting**: Lighting is the number one deterrent for crime during nighttime hours. Lighting helps an individual observe their surroundings and respond to a potential threat. While higher illuminance or greater luminance is often with safety, poorly directed light can reduce visibility and thereby reduce safety and security.

- **Guardianship:** Territorial Reinforcement and other CPTED principles are supported by a concept called guardianship. Informal guardians – people on site using the space or facility as intended – help establish and reinforce positive norms, attracting others to the space, with the potential to actively intervene to keep the place safe. This is considered positive guardianship. Guardians can also be negative. People engaged in illegal or intimidating behaviors also exert influence, attracting more unwanted activity and deterring others from using the space for its intended purpose. Many urban places also require the periodic presence of formal guardians – uniformed police or security officers – to reinforce positive uses and intervene for inappropriate or unsafe activity that occurs.

- **Wayfinding:** Wayfinding supports moving pedestrians and vehicles to and from buildings and the property using readily identifiable roadway transitions, sidewalks, clearly stated signage, and focal points. Wayfinding supports Natural Access Control and increases users' awareness of surroundings and the overall safety of pedestrians.

- **Activity Generators**: Places activities in strategic locations where natural surveillance is limited or unavailable. When the surrounding land use and conditions support it, Activity Generators, also called Place-Making[19], attract users and help to establish and support positive behaviors and may

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[19] More Placemaking Resources: Five Placemaking Projects that Inspire Us; Citizen Lab; Seattle Office of Arts & Culture

deter unwanted behaviors. Organized activities, such as concerts in the park, or uses such as food trucks with benches or tables, dog parks, bike and walking trails, and community gardens encourage activities that increase guardianship of the built environment.

- **Target Hardening:** Target Hardening is accomplished by features that prohibit entry or access: window locks, dead bolts for doors, interior door hinges. A note of caution: Excessive target hardening may create a "fortressing" effect and could result in a business, home or park appearing as an unsafe or unwelcoming place.

- **Organized and mechanical security measures:** CPTED focuses on design elements and natural modification of the built environment to accomplish its goals. Natural CPTED elements can be complemented and strengthened using **Organized Strategies,** which utilize the human element, sometimes called 'formal guardians', such as security guards, receptionists, and door greeters. **Mechanical Strategies** can also be built-in to further harden a target. Deadbolt locks, astragal plates, surveillance cameras, and alarm systems all contribute to the Mechanical Strategy of crime prevention.

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Site-Wide Recommendations

1. **Natural Surveillance:**
Ideally, our public spaces afford reliable opportunities for natural surveillance to help us know if an area is safe to enter. If Natural Surveillance – the ability to see and be seen – is limited, pedestrians and other users of the space may feel unsafe and anxious, some may avoid the area entirely. Where there is poor Natural Surveillance, offenders may feel more comfortable.

Current conditions along the 3rd Ave corridor limit natural surveillance:
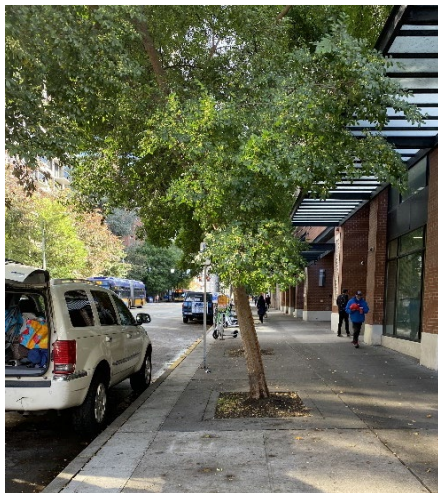
i. **Low tree canopies:** Street tree growth blocks sight lines. CPTED Landscape standards require shrubs and ground cover be maintained to a maximum height of 3 feet and tall shrubs and tree canopies are maintained to a minimum 6-8 feet from the ground.

Recommendation: Street trees along 3rd Ave and adjacent streets will benefit from pruning and maintenance. Check in spring when trees are leafing out and report through FIFI if canopy needs to be raised or pruning is needed to allow street lighting to shine through.
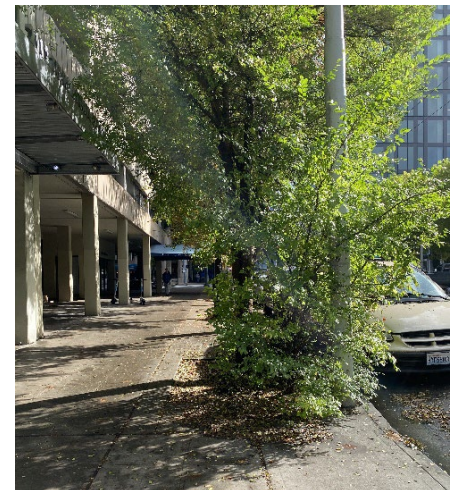
Figure 2-3: The above tree's canopy is lower than 6 ft. blocking the amount of the street and adjacent roadway a pedestrian can see. The tree in the image to the right has water shoots obstructing sight lines. Regular maintenance including raising tree canopies improves the ability to see and be seen and safety on the street. Consult SDOT Urban Forestry for resources and guidance.

ii. **Construction scaffolding and paneling impedes sight lines and provides an environment that supports illegal and unwanted activity:** The presence of scaffolding and a plywood panel wall on the public sidewalk at the construction site at 2000 3rd Ave creates a major impediment for sight lines along the sidewalk and Metro Bus stops. The pedestrian lane is narrowed at either end which can obscure potential threats, leaving pedestrians vulnerable at choke points. The scaffolding also creates conditions that support illegal and unwanted activities, including unpermitted street vending. (discussed below under Image, Maintenance/Reputation).

Recommendation: Work with the contractor Build Group, and Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI), to explore opportunities to minimize the footprint of the scaffolding and obstruction of sightlines by using transparent materials or angling barricade to improve sight lines.
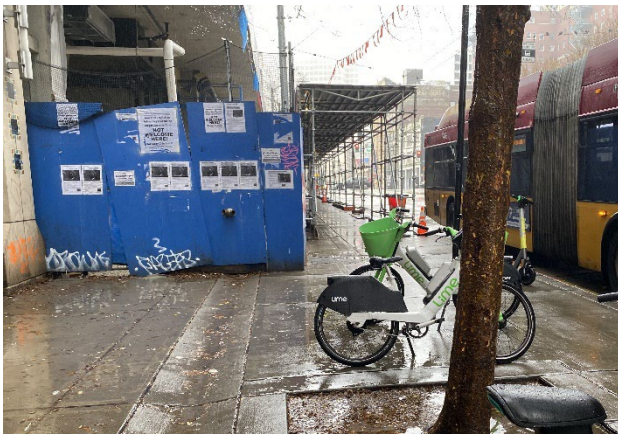
Figure 4-5: Construction scaffolding on the NE corner of 3rd Ave and Virginia St. narrows the pedestrian pathway, creating choke points that limit sight lines and options for pedestrians. Photo on the left shows the entry point from the north and on right, entry from the south.

Ideally, scaffolding will be removed as soon as possible to open full access to the public sidewalk.

iii. **Blocked windows and empty storefronts reduce opportunities for Natural Surveillance - "eyes on the street":** Many of the available, street level commercial space with storefront views onto in the 3rd Ave are vacant or have posters or privacy blinds covering storefront windows, removing opportunity for occupants to see activity on the street. Unobstructed views from windows of open, street level stores and businesses help create the perception of being seen which can deter unwanted activity from taking place while adding vibrancy to the street environment.

Recommendation: Explore opportunities to activate vacant businesses and storefronts with uses that benefit the local community with support of Seattle Office of Economic Development and programs like Seattle Restored. Temporary uses – such pop-up businesses, and other creative, place-making approaches have been used in urban neighborhoods for decades to establish and support positive behaviors and deter unwanted activity.

Businesses can limit ads and window displays to 10 percent of the window. Offices and clinics can look for opportunities to open blinds (where the need for privacy doesn't prohibit) or to reconfigure offices, including meeting space or break rooms, to maximize views of the street.
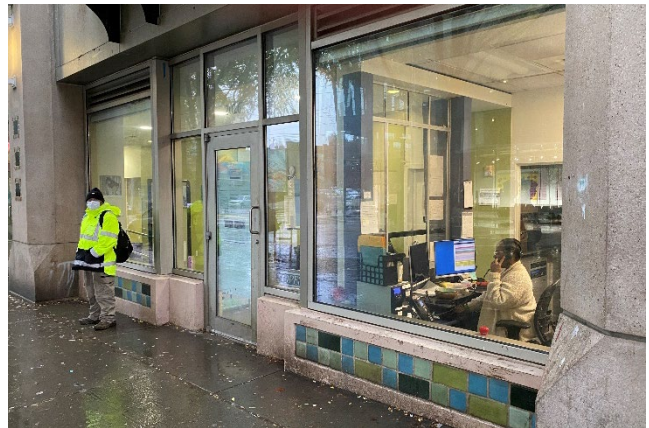
Figures 6-7-8: Exploring other strategies for marketing will provide an opportunity for the business in top left photo to remove ads from storefront windows, opening views to the street that can attract customers and deter criminal and unwanted activity. Top right and bottom photos depict businesses with open views, adding vibrancy and increasing informal guardianship on the street.

iv. **Parking on Blanchard limits sight lines down an already narrow sidewalk.**

   <u>Recommendation:</u> Work with SDOT to explore changing back-in, angle parking to parallel to open sight lines down sidewalk.

v. **Natural light to public sidewalk and building entrances is impeded.**

   <u>Recommendation:</u> Clean transparent awnings to allow more sunlight to pass through to brighten sidewalks and entrance ways during the day. Adding lighting of storefronts and under canopies will brighten the street during hours of darkness.

vi. **Assess lighting levels on building facades and entrances, add luminaires where needed to assure pedestrian pathways are evenly lit**. The focus blocks of 3rd Ave lack pedestrian scale lighting and while the cobra streetlamps do light the public sidewalk fairly well, light levels are uneven due to the presence of street trees and building awnings that block the light.

   <u>Recommendation:</u> All properties should assess lighting levels, particularly at building entrances, to assure pathways are evenly lit (no dark patches) providing the pedestrian with the ability to see and be seen. Luminaires should be shielded to avoid hampering night vision, and carefully oriented toward pathways, lighting from 5-6 vertical feet, allowing a person to see and recognize a face 30ft ahead. Ensure the light source and color quality is optimized for obtaining quality

image where security cameras are used. Exterior lights are ideally equipped with photo sensors or timers to come on automatically at dusk, off at dawn. Adding lights under awnings that block light from overhead streetlamps will support even lighting along the pedestrian zone.

Lighting levels in alleyways adjacent to the focus area were not reviewed for this summary.

2. **Access Control & Territorial Definition/Reinforcement:**
Design features that delineate public spaces from transitional zones and private spaces help to reduce competing and conflicting use of space**.** In dense urban environments, Territorial Reinforcement is a key CPTED strategy and a two-part concept: First, it's essential to make clear the purpose of the different public and private places that make up an urban business district through use of physical design and culturally relevant features to provide clear guidance on what the intended (positive) uses and predictable consequences for inappropriate (negative) use. Second, in the advent of inappropriate use, it's important the appropriate intervention occurs in a timely manner.

Current conditions along the 3rd Ave corridor that will benefit from enhanced Access Control & Territorial Definition:

i. **The presence of tents and unpermitted street venders gathering in the "eddy[20]" or nook created on the public sidewalk by construction barricade at 2000 3rd Ave**. The persistent presence of illegal vendors at this location creates an environment where negative guardians - people engaged in illegal or intimidating behaviors exert influence on the street environment, attracting more unwanted activity and deterring others from using the space for its intended purpose. Illegal street vending has known nexus with narcotics activity / organized retail crime (ORC) /EBT Fraud and violent crime. Many "Boosters" engaged in theft and shoplift suffer from substance use disorder, stolen property is sold at illegal street markets, cash is then used to purchase narcotics, with drug dealers often in the vicinity. Drug transactions often lead to conflict, increasing chances for violent crime in the area. Illegal street vending is frequently observed near busy bus stops.

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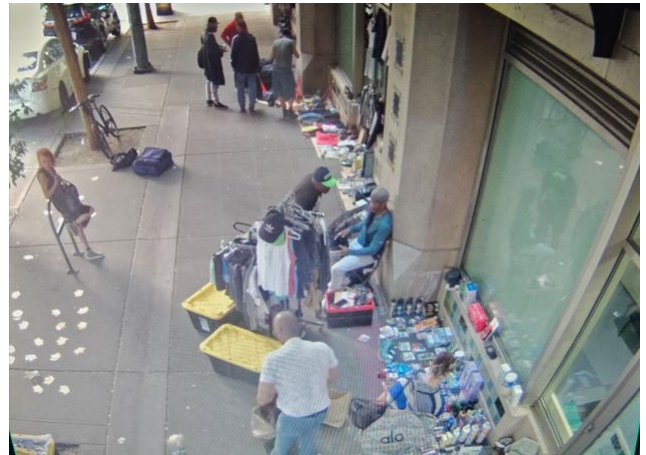
[20] Merriam Webster defines eddy as a circular current running contrary to the main current. The construction scaffolding obstructs the public sidewalk, creating an eddy, such as in a stream, that is contrary to flow of pedestrian traffic, making a convenient spot to set up an illegal market – location, location, location!

Figures 9-10: The photo on page 9 shows a security camera view of the array of items being sold at illegal street markets, a frequent presence on the SE corner of 3rd and Virginia. The above photo shows pedestrian and transit riders left to navigate a path through or around the market crowd to pass or catch their bus.

Recommendation: Work with SDOT Street and Sidewalk Vending program and local business advocacy organizations to develop strategies that deter unauthorized street vending, directing interested entrepreneurs to the street vending permit application process: Call 206.684.ROAD or 684-Road@seattle.gov or Find It / Fix It mobile app. Illegal street vendors in this CPTED focus area and in other locations in our city are often seen at KC Metro Transit bus stops.

Recommendation: Work with King County Metro Transit to increase patrol checks of bus stops and shelters and enforce the Ride Right Code of Conduct to increase guardianship and assure transit amenities are used for transit purposes. Request King County Metro Transit police/security increase the frequency of checks, particularly during peak use periods such as commute times and other times of day when vulnerable members of the community, such as the elderly and youth must access transit.

ii. **Businesses / medical clinics and agencies providing social services to the public would benefit from posting clear signage declaring the name and type of business as well as hours of operations and uses and behaviors that are permitted.**

Recommendation: Celebrate business entrances site-wide by clearly marking pedestrian and vehicle entry points to direct access/egress to these locations through use of landscape and design features, signage, and art to 'celebrate' or help draw attention and guide customers to your entrance.

Figure 11-12: The flyer and street sign above are from a pilot program in the C-ID's Little Saigon Neighborhood aimed at educating residents on the harmful impacts, for individuals and the community, of participating in illegal street markets. The program is a partnership of the C-ID BIA, Seattle Police and Department of Transportation.

iii. **Parking lots are frequent settings for criminal activity including car theft and prowl, and the sale and use of illegal drugs.**

Recommendation: Engage stakeholders surrounding surface lot on NW corner of 3rd and Lenora to collaborate on monitoring the lot and promptly reporting misuse, suspicious or criminal activity: King County Public Health, Coffee Tab, Diamond Parking.

Commercial businesses can sign up for the SPD Criminal Trespass Program**,** and post Conditions of Entry signs at all pedestrian and vehicle entrances and enforce consistently.
Connect with SPD Crime Prevention to schedule a security assessment for your business, office or residential building for practical ideas on reducing opportunity for crime to occur and enhancing safety: Barbara.biondo@seattle.gov or 206.233.0015

3. Image/Maintenance and Reputation:

Care and maintenance of public infrastructure and private facilities serves as an expression of ownership and supports use of a space for its intended purpose.

Current conditions along the 3rd Ave corridor that signals tolerance of disorder:

i. **In addition to the illegal street market activity described above, the presence of litter and graffiti on both private and public property undermines use of a space for its intended purpose.**

Recommendation: Promptly repair any damage, remove graffiti and tagging on private property and report damage graffiti on public property including Metro Transit bus stops and remove graffiti, report on the Find It/ Fix It mobile app.

ii. **Replace missing street trees:** Street trees provide important health, environmental and economic benefits for the whole community.

Recommendation: Engage business and property owners to collaborate with the SDOT's Trees for Seattle program to maintain healthy street trees. Street trees are missing in some locations, leaving vacant tree wells which create a pedestrian hazard and collect litter. Explore installation of SDOT approved tree well grates or porous covering for tree pits to provide ADA accessibility and sustainable conditions for street tree growth and longevity.

4. Community Activation:

The involvement and support of the people who use and have connections to the place is essential to creating and maintaining safe spaces.

The diverse stakeholders on these urban blocks of our city will benefit from establishing and maintaining connections that foster a sense of community and common cause regarding safety and maintaining conditions that create a welcoming and safe environment for all. Existing organizations, such as community councils, can assist but additional support may be required to engage the clinics and social service and permanent supportive housing communities' connection with other residents and

businesses in this southern section of the Belltown neighborhood. Active, community-based organizations in Belltown include the Belltown Community Council, the Belltown Business Association and Belltown United, a coalition of community volunteers, residential and business associations. More information on community groups, community grants, and upcoming events is available by contacting the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods Community Engagement Coordinators.

Recommendation: Support the informal guardians of this community exert more influence to establish positive uses as the norm for inside and outside their businesses, clinics, offices and residences and adjacent public areas. Strengthening connections, increasing communication across the sectors, and carefully assessing local assets and needs, will help identify areas where additional resources or support can increase capacity to work together for the betterment of the community and neighborhood.

Figures 13-14: Community activation can take many forms. The top photo shows a placemaking approach in Chicago IL. The mural was created by artist Molly Costello and reflects interviews with over 70 locals for inspiration. Source: Innovation Quarter: Five Placemaking Projects that Inspire Us. The bottom photo shows the interest and involvement of stakeholders of the 3rd Virginia-Blanchard community in the Fall of 2023, collaborating to create a safer street environment for all.

APPENDIX G
Case Study Information

Overview of the Case Study Area

Our case study area is geographically focused on a two-block area in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood, specifically Third Avenue from Virginia Street to Blanchard Street, where overdoses and crimes against persons are highly concentrated. This area includes three permanent supportive housing facilities, a homeless shelter for women, a day shelter for women, a medical clinic that provides healthcare for homeless and at-risk patients, and the office for the region's largest outreach provider that provides integrated care management and connects people experiencing homelessness with needs including medical care, shelter, mental health, and substance use treatment. This two-block area is an important service hub for many of Seattle's most vulnerable residents. The agencies at this location primarily serve people who are homeless or recently homeless and who have complex needs including physical and mental health challenges, substance use disorder, trauma, victimization, and justice system involvement. However, there is currently no shared vision for this space or a collective identity. In addition, the heavy demands of the individual organizations' missions currently leave little capacity for coordination and collaboration with the other agencies at the site and with the City government to address the neighborhood conditions.

The blocks contain a mix of older office and commercial buildings with newer residential buildings, including market-rate apartments and condos and the three permanent supportive housing Buildings. The current vacancy rate in this area is 40 percent, nearly triple Seattle's current overall vacancy rate of 14 percent. The vacant street-level commercial spaces in this area reduce the natural guardianship and create opportunities for illegal street markets, drug markets, and unsanctioned tent encampments to form. Third Avenue is a major transportation corridor, and the focus blocks include stops for two King County Metro Transit RapidRide bus routes. This stretch of Third Avenue is busy throughout the day with pedestrians and transit riders. For 2023, annual foot traffic for this two-block area was measured at approximately 278,300.

We began applying the Strategic Prevention Framework for our case study site and developed the preliminary assessment and asset map below.

Strategic Prevention Framework Step 1: Assessment – Using Multiple Data to Understand the Case Study Site

To understand the problems in the case study site, we analyzed multiple data for the case study site and conducted surveys of residents and workers in the case study site (Housing Environment Survey Results). We provided a summary of our analyses below.

**Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC) Fatal Overdoses**
There were 732 fatal overdoses in Seattle between July 2022 and July 2023; 33 fatal overdoses occurred in Belltown (ZIP code 98121); 33 percent of overdoses in Belltown (11 overdoses) occurred at the case study site.

Fatal overdose involving fentanyl only	1
Fatal overdose involving cocaine only	1
Fatal overdose involving methamphetamine only	2
Fatal overdose involving combination of multiple substances (fentanyl, cocaine, methamphetamine, methadone)	7
Total Number of Fatal Overdoses	**11**
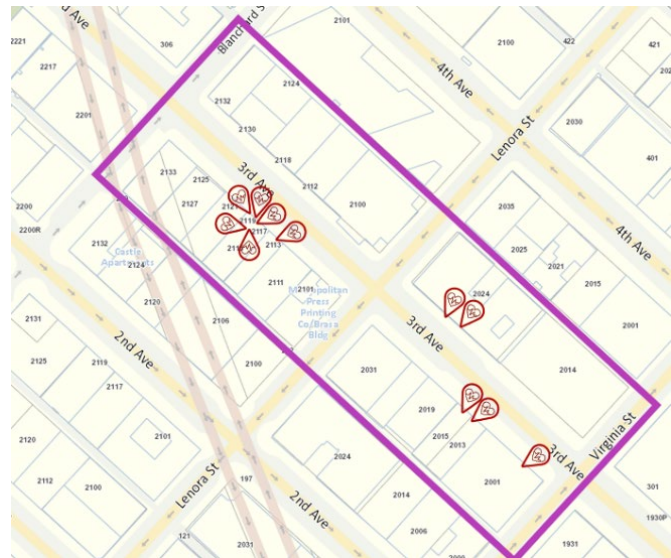
SFD Overdose Response
Between July 2022 and July 2023, the Seattle Fire Department responded to 1,741 overdose calls for service around the city. SFD responded to 30 calls for overdoses in the case study location.
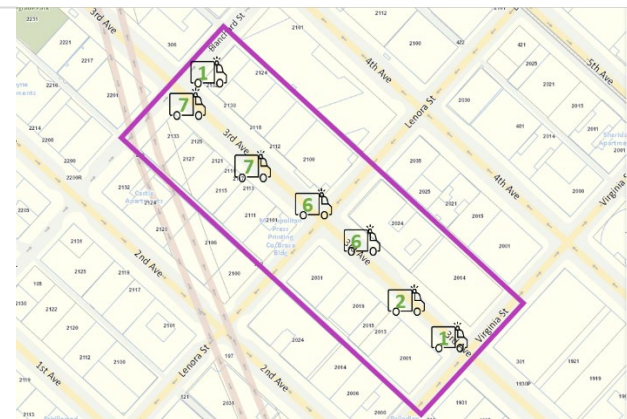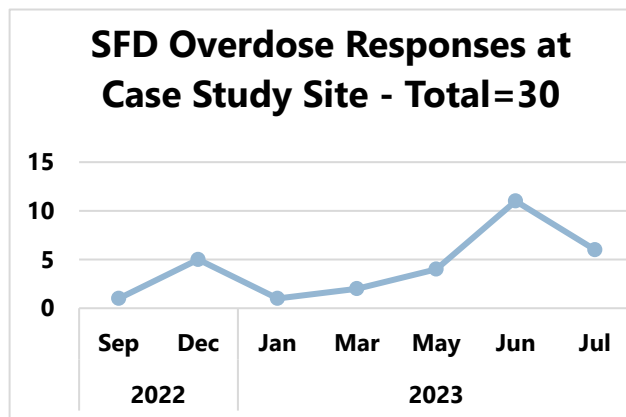

*There might be some overlaps between the fatal overdose data and overdose response data. We did not assess whether the overdoses SFD responded to at the study site led to a fatal outcome.

SPD Crime Against Persons

The crime data analysis focuses on crime against persons from July 2022 to July 2023 in the case study site. The fluctuation in crime over the 13 months analyzed can be due to multiple influencing factors including changes in the surrounding area and motivation to report crime. Between January 2023 and July 2023, four staff that worked for organizations within the study site were victims of these crimes.

	July 2022 - Dec 2022	Jan 2023 - July 2023	Total
Assault	9	15	24
Harassment	4	1	5
Menacing Threat	0	2	2
Others (Hate Crime, etc.)	0	3	3
Total Crime Against Persons	**13**	**21**	**34**

Crime Against Persons
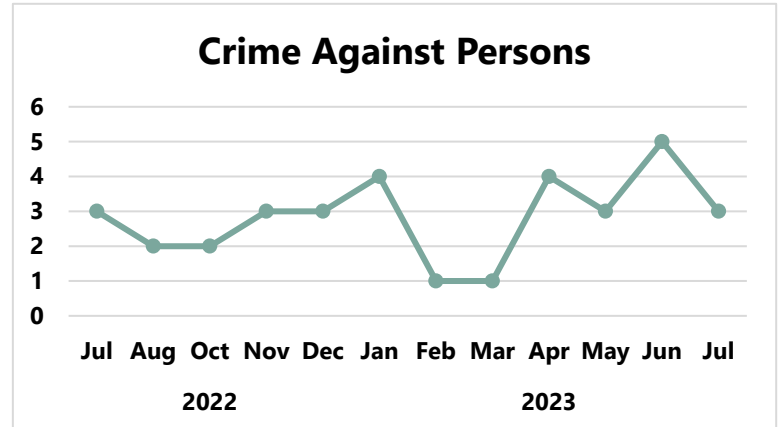
*The crime against persons analysis was based on distinct count of Reporting Event Number and does not represent the total number of victims.

Sources: Office of City Auditor analysis of PHSKC fatal overdose data, SFD overdose response data, and SPD crime data

Strategic Prevention Framework Step 2: Understanding Case Study Area's Capacity with an Asset Map

1. Plymouth Housing Sylvia Odom's Place
2. YWCA Opportunity Place
3. Harborview Third Avenue Center (Clinic)
4. YWCA Angeline's Day Center
5. Plymouth Housing Administration Offices
6. Plymouth Housing Langdon & Anne Simons Senior Apartments
7. Evergreen Treatment Services REACH Office

M King County Metro Stop

Number	Name	Address	Description & Website
1	Plymouth Housing Sylvia Odom's Place	2017 Third Avenue	Sylvia Odom's Place opened in February 2016. This building houses formerly homeless adults who have participated in Plymouth's innovative Housing Options Program. These residents move from one of Plymouth's 24/7 supportive properties to more independent (yet still supportive) living at Sylvia Odom's Place—simultaneously opening up fully supportive homes for people who are moving right out of homelessness. • 65 studio apartments • Community meeting room • Ground floor retail space is currently used for offices • Building is staffed (not 24/7) • Staff are trained in overdose response, including administration of naloxone; naloxone is available for residents. Website: https://plymouthhousing.org/our-housing/tour-a-plymouth-building/
2	YWCA Opportunity Place	2024 Third Avenue	YWCA Opportunity Place includes a WorkSource Center, a Homeless Employment Program, and permanent affordable housing units. Angeline's Day Center for Women, a day shelter for women experiencing homelessness is located on site. Located on the second floor, the WorkSource center offers computer access, classes and training, and case management designed to help homeless individuals improve their chances for

Number	Name	Address	Description & Website
			employment. This WorkSource site offers a variety of employment, educational and economic empowerment services including: - A job bank with computers, phones, and fax as well as updated job listings - Career development assistance including resume, cover letter and interview assistance - Technology workshops and "open lab" for application assistance - Career counseling, job clubs, resume clinics, mock interviews, and applications help - Job fairs, hiring events, employer panels, and industry forums - Basic education, ESL, and GED classes as well as the High School 21+ program - Individualized and intensive employment services based on program eligibility The Homeless Employment Program provides people experiencing homelessness or people who are at risk of homelessness with a full range of individualized employment and support services needed to achieve self-sufficiency and stable housing. The top five floors include 145 studio and 1-bedroom apartments. The modern, comfortable units include fully equipped kitchens, private bathrooms and windows, most with exterior views. Opportunity Place https://www.ywcaworks.org/locations/opportunity-place Work Source https://www.ywcaworks.org/programs/worksource-affiliate-downtown-seattle
3	Harborview Third Avenue Center (Clinic)	2028 Third Avenue	UW Harborview Third Avenue Center provides acute and primary healthcare for adult patients residing in downtown Seattle, placing an emphasis on engaging homeless and at-risk patients in primary care. Their mental healthcare professionals provide a range of services including psychiatric consultations, medication management and recommendations for continued psychiatric care. Social workers are available to help patients access additional community services and resources. Health education is available for many conditions, either in the clinic or through the Harborview Patient and Family Resource Center. UW Medicine's specialty services and hospitalization are also available to patients if needed. The clinic also provides an on-site nurse at the YWCA Angeline's Day Center. Website: https://www.uwmedicine.org/locations/third-avenue-center

Number	Name	Address	Description & Website
4	YWCA Angeline's Day Center	2030 Third Avenue	Drop-in services for more than 200 women each day include: • Breakfast and lunch service • Access to bathrooms, showers, and laundry • Personal storage lockers • Group activities and workshops • Health care access – including an on-site nurse from UW Harborview • Referrals to community services There is also an overnight shelter for 55 women. Case management and overnight shelter are provided to women enrolled in Angeline's Enhanced Night program, which helps participants transition into permanent housing. Rapid rehousing for single adults is another program to help participants cover costs associated with permanent housing. Website: https://www.ywcaworks.org/programs/angelines-day-center
5	Plymouth Housing Administration Offices	2113 Third Avenue	Plymouth Housing is one of the largest providers of low-income housing in downtown Seattle with over 1,200 residents and 17 retail tenants in 14 buildings. Plymouth primarily serves individuals who may have failed in housing in the past, or who cannot access decent, affordable housing due to poverty, disabilities, or a previous criminal record.
6	Plymouth Housing Langdon & Anne Simons Senior Apartments	2119 Third Avenue	Simons Senior Apartments feature: • 95 studio apartments designed for seniors and military service veterans (55+) • Five units are fully handicap accessible; eleven are partially handicap accessible • Two outdoor common areas and two indoor terrace areas and gardens • On-site nursing office staffed by NeighborCare Health • 24/7 on site staff • Staff are trained in overdose response, including administration of naloxone; naloxone is available for residents Website: https://plymouthhousing.org/our-housing/tour-a-plymouth-building/
7	Evergreen Treatment Services REACH Office	2133 Third Avenue	REACH provides integrated care management and connects people experiencing homelessness with needs including medical care, shelter, mental health, and substance use treatment. REACH also participates in the Let Everyone Advance with Dignity/Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion program for people who commit law violations related to behavioral health issues or extreme poverty. Website: https://www.etsreach.org/
Site-Wide	Downtown Seattle		The MID provides cleaning, safety, and hospitality services to this site 362 days per year. Organizations and businesses at this site can

Number	Name	Address	Description & Website
	Association – Metropolitan Improvement District (MID)		request any MID service through the dispatch line at 206-441-3303 or by completing an online form. Website: https://downtownseattle.org/programs-services/metropolitan-improvement-district/

Preliminary Draft – Example Only

In February 2024, we worked with the Mayor's Office, SPD, Plymouth Housing, and the YWCA to apply for a <u>five-year, $1.8 million grant from SAMHSA</u> to extend and strengthen the capacity of local community prevention providers to implement evidence-based prevention programs to help reduce the onset and progression of substance misuse and its related problems. The goals of our proposed approach are to reduce fatal overdoses and improve community safety in the two-block area on Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard. The grant application includes 22 specific evidence-based strategies for reducing crime and overdoses at this site. The City will be notified regarding the funding decision in August 2024.

Draft Year 1 Objectives for Reducing Overdoses and Crime on Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard. **These are subject to change based on further community input and are contingent upon federal funding.**

Tier 1: All – Universal/Site-Wide Supports
Evidence-Based Strategies to Reduce Crime

Strategy	Year 1 Objectives*
Increase Guardianship	Identify all private security staff on the site and create at least one mechanism for information-sharing.
Change the Physical Environment	Complete 25 percent of the site-wide recommendations (e.g., trimming street trees) in the Seattle Police Department's Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design report.
Change/Enforce Rules and Policies	Begin the Positive Behavior Supports initiative by identifying/crowd-sourcing the top three site-wide values.
Build Capacity for Community Problem-Solving	Formalize coalition for Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard and hold at least four coalition meetings following the Strategic Prevention Framework.

Overdose Prevention Strategies

Strategy	Year 1 Objectives*
Enhanced Delivery of Evidence-Based Treatment	Conduct a site-wide inventory of existing evidence-based treatment programs, capacity, and participation rates.
Recovery Supports	Conduct a site-wide needs assessment of recovery supports through interviews, focus groups, and surveys with people who live or receive services at the site; distribute results to the coalition.
Integrated Harm Reduction	Conduct at least one site-wide training on administering naloxone combined with rescue breathing for overdoses that involve opioids/fentanyl and xylazine.
Data Monitoring and Primary Prevention	Finalize City participation in Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas ODMAP System and begin producing monthly reports for the coalition on overdose events and crimes against persons at the site.

Tier 2: Some – Targeted Supports
Evidence-Based Strategies to Reduce Crime

Strategy	Year 1 Objectives*
Increase Guardianship	Activate one vacant storefront with a social service or commercial business.
Change the Physical Environment	Complete 50 percent of the recommendations in the Seattle Police Department Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design report that are specific to the east side of Third Avenue from Virginia to Lenora.
Change/Enforce Rules and Policies	Identify an evidence-based program focused on competency and implementation of universal positive practices (e.g., Tools of Choice), and pilot with at least 20 members of the coalition and/or agency staff.
Build Capacity for Community Problem-Solving	Create an inventory of the commercial businesses at the site and conduct interviews with 10 percent of the businesses to identify issues, share information, and encourage participation in the coalition.

Overdose Prevention Strategies

Strategy	Year 1 Objectives*
Enhanced Delivery of Evidence-Based Treatment	Pilot the evidence-based intervention called patient-centered goal setting with 5 percent of permanent supportive housing residents at the site.
Recovery Supports	Work with Seattle Department of Transportation's circulator van to provide at least twice-daily service between the Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard and the Recovery Café.
Integrated Harm Reduction	Survey or interview at least 5 percent of permanent supportive housing residents at the site to identify harm reduction tools that they would be likely to use (e.g., Never Use Alone hotline).
Data Monitoring and Primary Prevention	For the permanent supportive housing partner organizations (i.e., Plymouth and YWCA) for all overdose events that occur during the year in their facilities, collect non-personally identifiable information about the specific circumstances, including location of the overdose (e.g., hallway, alley, etc.), whether the person was a resident or guest, drugs used and their form (e.g., pill, powder, etc.) staff involvement, etc.

Tier 3: Few – Intensive Supports
Evidence-Based Strategies to Reduce Crime

Strategy	Year 1 Objectives*
Increase Guardianship	Work with King County Metro Transit police/security to improve the impact of patrol checks at the northbound bus stop at Third and Lenora, particularly during peak use periods such as commute times and other times of day when vulnerable members of the community, elderly, youth must access transit.
Change the Physical Environment	Work with King County Metro to improve pedestrian lighting at the northbound bus stop at Third and Lenora.
Build Capacity for Community Problem-Solving	Develop a strategy to engage and support (e.g., caseworker assistance, stipends, etc.) at least two people with lived experience of homelessness and/or substance use disorder in the coalition.

Overdose Prevention Strategies	
Strategy	**Year 1 Objectives***
Enhanced Delivery of Evidence-Based Treatment	Extend participation in Plymouth Housing's site-based Contingency Management for methamphetamine use disorder to the two Plymouth buildings on Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard; at least 30 percent of participants will complete the 12-week program.
Recovery Supports	Create a recovery supports plan for at least 60 percent of permanent supportive housing residents who are participating in the University of Washington's Sublocade pilot for opioid use disorder for the first four months of injections.
Integrated Harm Reduction	For all overdoses that occur in a permanent supportive housing building, provide support to staff and tenants related to trauma resulting from overdose within two business days of the overdose.

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

Our Mission:

To help the City of Seattle achieve honest, efficient management and full accountability throughout City government. We serve the public interest by providing the City Council, Mayor and City department heads with accurate information, unbiased analysis, and objective recommendations on how best to use public resources in support of the well-being of Seattle residents.

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.

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The City Can Do More to Tackle Organized Retail Crime in Seattle

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Seattle Office of City Auditor

The City Can Do More to Tackle Organized Retail Crime in Seattle

Report Highlights

Background

In recent years, the characteristics of retail crime have shifted and become more sophisticated. There is some emerging evidence that organized retail crime (ORC) has increased due, in part, to an increased use of online marketplaces for selling stolen goods. This audit is focused on fencing operations related to ORC. "Fencing" is the practice of reselling stolen goods through online marketplaces, unregulated markets such as illegal street markets, storefronts that buy stolen goods, and by shipping goods for sale outside of the U.S.

What We Found

This audit presents seven steps for the City to improve its approach to addressing the organized fencing operations that underpin ORC in Seattle:

1. Support City participation in collaborative efforts among agencies, including collaboration with the new Organized Retail Crime Unit in the Washington State Attorney General's Office.
2. Leverage federal and state crime analysis resources.
3. Use in-custody interviews of "boosters"—people who steal on behalf of fencing operations—to gather information on fencing operations.
4. Explore new uses of technology to address ORC.
5. Use place-based approaches to disrupt unregulated street markets.
6. Follow the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office "prosecution checklist" for ORC cases.
7. Consider City support of legislation that addresses ORC.

Recommendations

For each step, we have included specific recommendations for actions that the City could take to improve its approach to ORC. Given the City's current resource constraints, especially for the Seattle Police Department (SPD), our recommendations largely focus on leveraging new and existing collaborations, using existing expertise and resources, and exploring new technologies.

Seattle Police Department Response

In their formal written response, SPD stated they will work with the City to implement the recommendations.

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INTRODUCTION

Audit Overview

Seattle City Councilmembers Andrew Lewis and Lisa Herbold requested that our office conduct an audit regarding retail theft in Seattle. We examined 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 shipping goods for sale outside of the U.S. This audit focuses on fencing operations associated with organized retail crime.
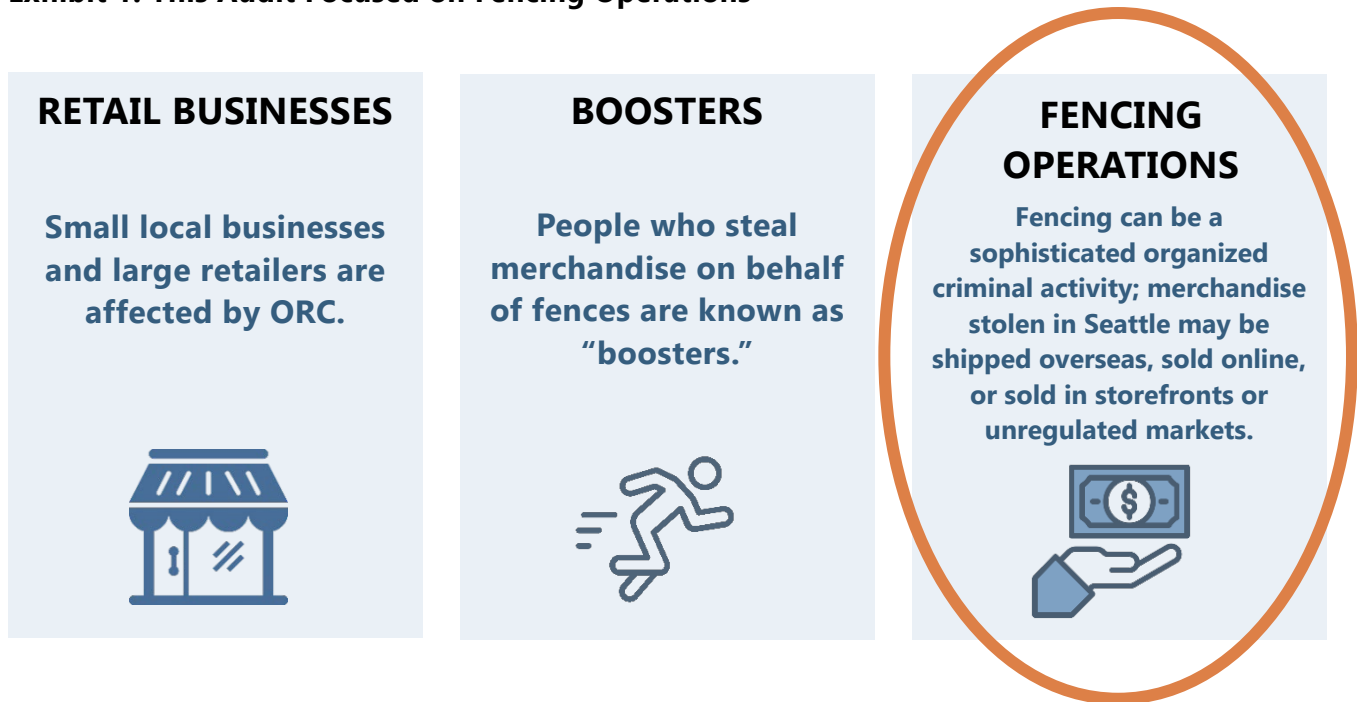
Background

In recent years, the characteristics of retail crime have shifted and become more sophisticated. There is some emerging evidence that organized retail crime (ORC) has increased due, in part, to an increased use of online marketplaces for selling stolen goods.[1] ORC operations can involve millions of dollars of stolen merchandise and be linked with other serious crimes including narcotics trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, and even terrorism.

The newly-funded Organized Retail Crime Unit in the Washington State Attorney General's Office and a new program in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security called Operation Boiling Point will offer the City of Seattle (City) significant opportunities for collaboration and for leveraging resources to address ORC.

ORC is a complex, evolving problem that is intertwined with the growth of online retail and the housing and addiction crises, driving people who are homeless and people with substance use disorder to steal on behalf of organized retail crime rings. This audit does not address all aspects of ORC. Rather, based on preliminary fieldwork that we conducted in spring 2022, we decided to focus our analysis on fencing operations related to ORC. "Fencing" is the practice of reselling stolen goods through online marketplaces, unregulated markets such as illegal street markets, storefronts that buy stolen goods, and by shipping goods for sale outside of the U.S. (see Exhibit 1).

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[1] A 2021 report commissioned by the Retail Industry Leaders Association and the Buy Safe America Coalition found that, from 2003-2019, the growth in online marketplaces was highly correlated (61 percent) to the number of shoplifting events.

Exhibit 1: This Audit Focused on Fencing Operations

RETAIL BUSINESSES	BOOSTERS	FENCING OPERATIONS
Small local businesses and large retailers are affected by ORC.	People who steal merchandise on behalf of fences are known as "boosters."	Fencing can be a sophisticated organized criminal activity; merchandise stolen in Seattle may be shipped overseas, sold online, or sold in storefronts or unregulated markets.

Source: Seattle Office of City Auditor

Definitions of organized retail crime.

There is not currently a universally accepted definition of ORC. This is due in part to the fact that ORC tactics and circumstances can vary widely. ORC can involve highly sophisticated crime rings that systematically steal certain products, warehouse, and inventory the stolen products, then resell the products through legitimate physical or online businesses. ORC may also be perpetrated by individuals or small groups that steal and resell the items themselves, including smash-and-grab thefts and resale of high-value items.

Working Definitions of ORC. The Loss Prevention Research Council[2] is working to develop a definition of ORC that includes seven elements: 1) predatory crimes in which 2) one or more offenders 3) knowingly and intentionally 4) plan or coordinate criminal activities 5) on one or more occasion 6) with the intent of financially profiting themselves, a group, or a broader criminal enterprise with which they are associated 7) through the acquisition of cash, other financial instruments, or merchandise that can be resold, returned, exchanged, or otherwise used to generate a profit. The Washington Organized Retail Crime Association (WAORCA)[3] defines ORC as the theft/fraud activity conducted with the intent to convert illegally obtained merchandise, cargo, cash, or cash equivalent into financial gain when

[2] The Loss Prevention Research Council at the University of Florida supports the evidence-based needs of loss-prevention decision makers. Its membership includes over 70 major retail chains, and it has conducted over 300 loss-prevention research projects to date.
[3] The Washington Organized Retail Crime Association (WAORCA) assists law enforcement, retail investigators, and prosecutors in identifying, investigating, and prosecuting those involved in ORC.

the following elements are present: it occurs over multiple occurrences OR in multiple jurisdictions, conducted by two or more persons or an individual acting in dual roles (booster and fence)[4]. The Washington State Attorney General's Task Force focuses on ORC as involving a group of individuals who steal products in order to resell them for a profit; this does not include petty theft, shoplifting, or poverty-driven crimes.

Prosecution of ORC. In Washington state, prosecution of ORC may occur[5] under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 9A.56.350-Organized Retail Theft. This RCW applies to thefts of at least $750 worth of merchandise and establishes organized retail theft as a felony in the first degree (Class B felony) if the property stolen has a value of $5,000 or more. Per this RCW, a person is guilty of organized retail theft in the second degree if the stolen or possessed property has a value of at least $750, but less than $5,000. In addition, several sections of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) may apply to ORC misdemeanor offenses including SMC 12A.08.060 Theft, SMC 12A.08.160 Trafficking in stolen property, 12A.08.090 Possessing Stolen Property, and SMC 12A.08.040 Criminal Trespass.

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[4] Boosters are people who steal merchandise on behalf of fences. Fences resell stolen goods, sometimes through sophisticated methods.

[5] According to the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office (KCPAO), depending on the specific facts and circumstances, KCPAO may charge a theft from a retail establishment as one or more of the following felony crimes. The crimes in the left column are fairly specific to thefts from retail establishments. In other words, if that crime has been charged, it can be safely assumed that the factual scenario involves a theft from a retailer. The crimes in the right column are much less specific. In other words, if that crime has been charged, there cannot be any assumption as to whether or not it involved a theft from a retailer.

Fairly specific to thefts from retail establishments.	Less specific to thefts from retail establishments.
• Organized Retail Theft in the First Degree, RCW 9A.56.350(2). • Organized Retail Theft in the Second Degree, RCW 9A.56.350(3). • Retail Theft with Special Circumstances in the First Degree, RCW 9A.56.360(2). • Retail Theft with Special Circumstances in the Second Degree, RCW 9A.56.360(3). • Retail Theft with Special Circumstances in the Third Degree, RCW 9A.56.360(4). • Theft with Intent to Resell in the First Degree, RCW 9A.56.340(2). • Theft with Intent to Resell in the Second Degree, RCW 9A.56.340(3).	• Assault in the Third Degree, RCW 9A.36.031(1)(a). • Burglary in the Second Degree, RCW 9A.52.030. • Theft in the First Degree, RCW 9A.56.030. • Theft in the Second Degree, RCW 9A.56.040. • Robbery in the First Degree, RCW 9A.56.200. • Robbery in the Second Degree, RCW 9A.56.210. • Trafficking in Stolen Property in the First Degree, RCW 9A.82.050. • Trafficking in Stolen Property in the Second Degree, RCW 9A.82.055.

How Organized Retail Crime Groups Operate

Organized retail crime (ORC) groups generally include individuals serving in one of two main capacities: boosters or fences.

"Boosters" steal or illegally obtain merchandise for fences.[6] "Fences" pay boosters for stolen goods and then resell them to witting or unwitting consumers and businesses. Boosters work either alone or in groups to steal goods that they will later sell to fences for a fraction of the value or trade for drugs. Boosters often use lists provided by fences that itemize the goods fences desire. Boosters sometimes use high-powered magnets, modified clothing, or modified shopping bags lined with aluminum foil to conceal merchandise and circumvent electronic article surveillance or security tag technology. They may also simply fill up a shopping cart and push it out the door without making payment.

Fencing operations can be simple or operationally complex. Low-level fences, or "street fences," will sell the stolen goods directly to the public through unregulated street markets, flea markets, swap meets, or online. Boosters may also sell the merchandise to mid-level fences who run "cleaning operations." Cleaning operations remove security tags and store labels and repackage stolen goods to make them appear as though they came directly from the manufacturer. This cleaning process may even involve changing the expiration date on perishable goods, which creates public health and safety concerns. The "clean" goods may then be sold to the public or to higher-level fences, who operate illegitimate wholesale businesses. Through these businesses, the fences can supply merchandise to retailers, often mixing stolen merchandise with legitimate goods. In addition, fences selling goods via online marketplaces, or "e-fencing," may ship stolen goods across state or national lines. E-fencing is more profitable than fencing at physical locations.[7]

ORC groups target vulnerable individuals to serve as boosters.

Vulnerable individuals, including people who are homeless and people with substance use disorders, often serve as boosters in ORC, stealing from stores in exchange for drugs or a small payment. Boosters recently interviewed in New York City stated that boosting was a safer alternative to other crimes, including catalytic converter theft and prostitution. Many Seattle boosters, especially those who have been identified by the Seattle City Attorney's High Utilizer Initiative,[8] are people with substance use disorders. Our analysis of 2021 and 2022 data of ORC cases referred by the Seattle Police Department and

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[6] In some cases, boosters do not use a fence. Rather, they resell (i.e., fence) their own stolen merchandise through online marketplaces or unregulated street markets.

[7] While fences may profit about 30 cents on the dollar by selling goods at physical fencing locations, they can make about 70 cents on the dollar via e-fencing. (Finklea, 2012)

[8] The Seattle City Attorney's High Utilizer Initiative is a collaborative effort to identify and reduce the impact of individuals responsible for repeat criminal activity across Seattle. In total, the initiative included 168 individuals who were responsible for almost 3,500 misdemeanor referrals since 2017.

prosecuted by the King County Prosecuting Attorney indicated that boosters frequently were people who were homeless and/or people with substance use disorders. In addition, according to a report by the Association of Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialists and Homeland Security Investigations, undocumented immigrants who are labor-trafficked into the U.S. may also be forced to serve as boosters for ORC rings to pay off a debt.

Note: Evidence-Based Treatment Could Help Address Underlying Issues for Boosters

While this audit does not specifically address ORC boosters, it should be noted that new efforts in Seattle are underway to address substance use disorders through evidence-based treatment. These could potentially help reduce the number of people who are drawn to serve as boosters for ORC.

Our October 2022 audit report, Action is Needed to Explore Ways to Offer an Evidence-Based Treatment for People Who Use Methamphetamine, recommended that government, including the City of Seattle, should act with urgency to provide evidence-based treatment for people who use methamphetamine. Further, Mayor Bruce Harrell's April 2023 Executive Order outlines steps to address the public health and safety impacts of the fentanyl crisis in Seattle, including advancing evidence-based policies and programs to help people get treatment for substance use disorder.

ORGANIZED RETAIL CRIME IN THE CITY OF SEATTLE

Section Summary

Organized retail crime (ORC) is a concern for Seattle retailers of all sizes. While it is important to report ORC to the police for data-gathering and investigative purposes, Seattle Police Department (SPD) responses to calls for service from retailers in 2022 consumed significant resources. ORC fences can be involved with additional serious crimes, and they exploit vulnerable individuals to steal goods and shoulder the legal risks associated with ORC. Our report identifies seven steps the City can take to improve its approach to addressing the organized fencing operations that underpin ORC in Seattle.

ORC adversely affects Seattle retailers.

According to a 2022 National Retail Federation report, ORC rose by 60 percent since 2015, and nearly 70 percent of retailers nationwide reported an increase in ORC in 2021. Among the top U.S. cities affected by ORC, Seattle was 10th in 2020 and 8th in 2021, according to the 2022 National Retail Security Survey (Appendix B). The Washington Retail Association indicated that within the past year, more than half of Washington state retailers have reported an increase in theft, resulting in $2.7 billion in losses in the state.

ORC has become an increased concern for retailers of all sizes and in all areas of Seattle. On February 9, 2022, Councilmember Sara Nelson convened the Seattle City Council's Economic Development, Technology, and City Light Committee to hear from small business owners and neighborhood business representatives from around the city who expressed concerns about increased thefts, the safety of their staff and customers, and their ability to stay in business. A written statement delivered at that meeting by representatives from Seattle's neighborhood business districts stated, "Seattle's commercial districts are the heart of our neighborhoods and the center of all public life in our city. However, with the uptick in crime and behavioral health issues across the city, neighborhood business districts are getting hit hard and need help from our city leaders."

As community members and businesses expressed to the committee, ORC in Seattle can jeopardize the viability of small businesses, including those owned by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). It can harm the fabric of neighborhoods, such as Little Saigon, and adversely affect the safety and perception of safety of hourly wage retail workers and their customers.

ORC created a significant body of work for the Seattle Police Department in 2022.

In Seattle, retailers can report theft to SPD by calling 911 or through SPD's Retail Theft Program, which allows participating retailers to file misdemeanor theft cases without an officer's involvement. SPD indicates that there has been declining participation in its Retail Theft Program in recent years, and they have noticed a rise in SPD calls for service from retailers. We found that calls for service from retail locations created a significant body of work for SPD in 2022. SPD data indicates that, in 2022, there were 13,103 SPD calls for service from the top 100 retail locations, and the large majority of these calls for service, according to SPD, were related to retail theft. SPD tracks the time spent on each call by "Patrol Unit Service Hours," and each patrol unit may include one or more responding officers. For 2022, SPD patrol response to these 100 repeat retail locations totaled 18,615 Patrol Unit Service Hours. From our conservative calculations, SPD's time spent on these 100 retail locations in 2022 is equivalent to the annual work performed by nine full-time SPD patrol officers (see Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2: SPD Patrol Response to ORC was Equivalent to Nine Full-Time Officers in 2022

100 Seattle Retailers	13,103 SPD Calls for Service	18,615 Patrol Unit Service Hours	SPD Time Spent = 9 Full-Time Officers
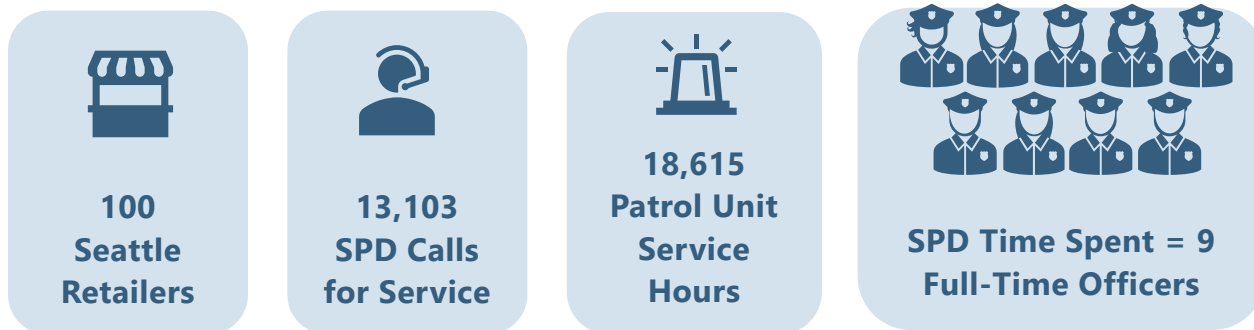
Source: Seattle Office of City Auditor

Reporting retail crime to law enforcement is important because it can help investigators link evidence and build ORC cases for prosecution. Law enforcement uses crime reporting data to allocate resources, and law enforcement cannot respond to and investigate incidents that are not reported. However, nationally, the Loss Prevention Research Council found that about 50 percent of retail crime is reported to law enforcement.

SPD officials indicated that in the first quarter of 2023, they did not receive any theft reports (neither through 911 nor through SPD's Retail Theft Program) from some large downtown retailers because those businesses have increased their use of security guards and off-duty officers and are choosing not to report ORC to the police. However, some retailers cannot afford extra security, and some retailers choose not to use or increase security to avoid the risk of lawsuits from

shoppers injured by security guards in the process of apprehending thieves or from the alleged thieves themselves.

Exhibit 3 shows the top 10 of the 100 retail locations that generated the most SPD Patrol Unit Service Hours in 2022. These 10 retail locations were in each of SPD's five precincts and represent a variety of retail sectors (e.g., grocery, home goods, clothing, and hardware). In 2022, there were 3,360 total SPD calls for service that generated 5,375 Patrol Unit Service Hours from these locations. Together, that is the equivalent of more than two-and-a-half full-time SPD patrol officers' work for just 10 retail locations in 2022.

Despite SPD's significant patrol response to retail crime, SPD officers often do not arrive at the retail location until long after the theft has occurred. For example, SPD 2022 case files document a suspect who entered a Target store, gathered over $1,000 in merchandise, yelled obscenities, and threatened to harm staff. The suspect told staff that police would probably not respond and stayed in the store for about two-and-a-half hours. SPD arrived after the suspect had left the store.

Exhibit 3: Top 10 Retail Locations Accounted for Over 5,000 SPD Patrol Unit Service Hours in 2022

SPD Precinct	Retail Location	2022 SPD Patrol Unit Service Hours	2022 SPD Calls for Service
South	Rainier Valley Square	963	681
Southwest	Westwood Village Shopping Center	816	518
North	Target-Northgate	584	643
North	Northgate Shopping Center	494	434
Southwest	Target-Westwood Village	469	171
West	Target-Downtown	468	169
West	Nordstrom-Downtown	420	177
East	Safeway-Central District	419	198
South	Safeway-Othello	391	231
South	Lowe's Rainier Avenue	351	138

5,375 Total SPD Patrol Unit Service Hours

3,360 Total SPD Calls for Service

SPD has limited capacity to pursue investigations of major ORC fencing operations. In 2022, SPD indicated that they were aware of at least four major fencing operations that sell goods stolen from Seattle retailers through unregulated markets and online marketplace, and by shipping overseas. However, SPD indicated that due to staffing

constraints, especially in SPD investigative units, the department's ability to investigate these fencing operations is extremely limited. SPD officials indicated that the department has prioritized investigations of violent crimes over property crimes, including ORC.

ORC is associated with other crimes.

The Washington Retail Association indicated that, in the past year, 80 percent of Washington state retailers have reported a rise in violence and aggression towards their frontline workers. Seattle retailers we interviewed reported that ORC boosters have increasingly made verbal and physical threats to their workers. Further, our analysis of 2021 and 2022 data for Seattle ORC cases prosecuted by the King County Prosecuting Attorney indicated that boosters were sometimes armed with weapons including knives and guns. Of the 49 cases prosecuted by the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office (KCPAO) Economic Crimes Unit, 11 involved the use of weapons and/or physical assault by boosters.[9]

Seattle's experience is consistent with national data. For example, according to the [2022 Retail Security Survey by the National Retail Federation](#), 81 percent of retailers nationally reported that ORC offenders are somewhat or much more violent when compared with 2021.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security acknowledges that ORC groups can also be involved in other crimes including narcotics trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, and even terrorism. Therefore, in October 2022, the department's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) launched a national program called [Operation Boiling Point](#) to address ORC by supporting investigations, conducting outreach, and coordinating with public and private sector partners.

## Why is it important to focus on disrupting fencing operations in Seattle?

ORC fences routinely and systematically monetize stolen goods for their profits. They are often involved with other financial crimes including money laundering and Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) fraud. Some fences also perpetrate serious crimes like narcotics and human trafficking. Fences can also exploit vulnerable people to serve as their boosters. There is precedent for efforts to address ORC by focusing on fencing operations. For example, in 2019 the Auburn, Washington Police Department, area retailers, and the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office worked together to investigate and prosecute a fencing case valued over $18 million. Afterward, Auburn-area retailers reported at least a 30 percent drop in ORC. Also, in the wake of [publicized](#) ORC increases in San Francisco's commercial corridors in the summer of 2021, the San Francisco Police Department created a new three-person investigative unit focused on fencing operations within their Major Crimes Division. This unit works to

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[9] KCPAO notes that cases involving retail theft that include more violent encounters would be prosecuted by the Violent Crimes Unit (e.g., as assault) rather than the Economic Crimes Unit.

disrupt street-level marketplaces, research and investigate local online sellers of stolen goods, and collaborate with other agencies like the FBI on ORC cases in which goods stolen in San Francisco are transported and resold internationally.

Further, in a meeting of the Seattle City Council's Public Safety and Human Services Committee, Councilmember Andrew Lewis identified that, in our current system, ORC fences face little legal risk. He noted that, "most of the risk (of ORC) is borne with potential misdemeanor exposure by the people going into the store to steal, and the people fencing the goods have a plentiful supply of people that they can just churn through the system to go and steal things for them." Our analysis of the 49 ORC cases referred to the King County Prosecuting Attorney in 2022 indicated that only four[10] of them indicated how the goods were fenced. The remaining 45 other ORC cases did not indicate how the goods were fenced, but they involved thefts that exceeded the $750 felony threshold. SPD case reports indicate that some of the defendants in these cases were people who were homeless[11] and had substance use disorders. Compared to Seattle's population,[12] a disproportionate 38 percent (17 of 45 total) of the defendants were Black (see Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4: Race/Ethnicity of ORC Booster Cases in 2021-2022

> Despite representing only 6.8 percent of Seattle's population, a disproportionate <u>38 percent</u> (17 of 45) of the defendants in these cases were Black/African American.
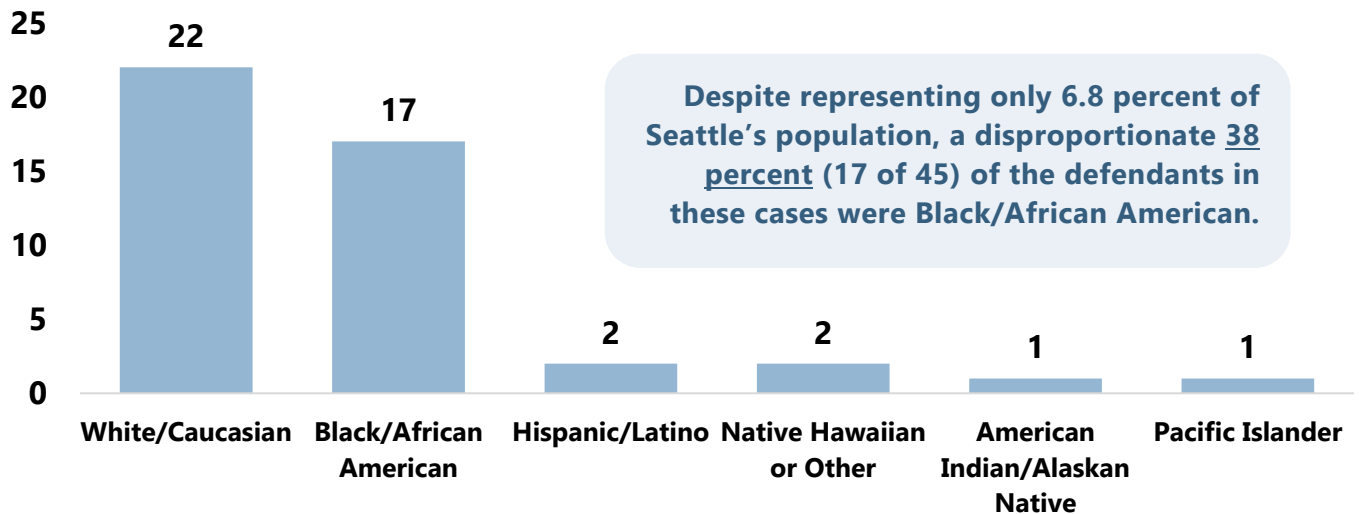
Source: Seattle Office of City Auditor

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[10] For these cases, two of the individuals resold the items they stole themselves on OfferUp; one individual resold tools he stole on an unidentified online platform; and one individual resold liquor he stole to businesses in Pioneer Square.

[11] For example, 18 of the 49 case files listed the defendant's address as a homeless shelter.

[12] According to the 2020 U.S. census, 6.8 percent of Seattle's population is Black or African American.

Seven steps for improving the City's approach to ORC.

The following sections of this report present seven steps for the City to improve its approach to addressing the organized fencing operations that underpin ORC in Seattle:

1. Support City participation in collaborative efforts among agencies (including collaboration with the new Organized Retail Crime Unit in the Washington State Attorney General's Office).
2. Leverage federal and state crime analysis resources.
3. Use in-custody interviews of boosters to gather information on fencing operations.
4. Explore new uses of technology to address ORC.
5. Use place-based approaches to disrupt unregulated street markets.
6. Follow the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office "prosecution checklist" for ORC cases.
7. Consider City support of legislation that addresses ORC.

For each step, we have included specific recommendations for actions that the City could take to improve its approach to ORC. Given the City's current resource constraints, especially for SPD, our recommendations largely focus on leveraging new and existing collaborations, using existing expertise and resources, and exploring new technologies.

STEP 1: CONTINUE TO SUPPORT CITY PARTICIPATION IN ORC COLLABORATIONS

Section Summary

Effectively addressing organized retail crime (ORC) requires collaboration among law enforcement agencies, retailers, and prosecutors. Since SPD resources are currently constrained, it is especially important for the City to continue to participate in ORC collaborations that will minimize the burden on SPD and capitalize on the resources available from other agencies at the federal, state, and local levels. There is a need for internal City structures to ensure coordination of strategies and information-sharing among various City staff who participate in the ORC collaborations.

The City currently participates in new and existing ORC collaborations.

City of Seattle staff and officials currently participate in collaborations that can help address ORC, including dismantling fencing operations. These collaborations include a new Homeland Security Investigations program, the new Washington State Attorney General's ORC Task Force, the Washington Organized Retail Crime Association (WAORCA), and the Downtown Security Forum.

Homeland Security Investigations Program. Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) is the principal investigative arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security tasked with investigating, disrupting, and dismantling transnational criminal organizations and terrorist networks that threaten or seek to exploit the customs and immigration laws of the United States. In October 2022, HSI launched a national program called Operation Boiling Point to address ORC by supporting investigations, conducting outreach, and coordinating with public and private sector partners. SPD is well-positioned to collaborate with HSI. A detective from SPD's Intelligence Unit is detailed to work exclusively with HSI under a Supervisory Special Agent for the Seattle region. Recently, this SPD detective collaborated with HSI, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and regional law enforcement agencies to indict an ORC team that victimized 190 stores across 23 states, including 10 in Western Washington.

Washington State Attorney General ORC Task Force and ORC Unit. In July 2022, the Washington State Attorney General created a statewide Organized Retail Crime Theft Task Force. The task force has held three public meetings to look at ORC from various vantage points including online and brick-and-mortar retailers; large and small businesses; owners, employees, and security personnel; and local, state, and federal law enforcement. Representatives shared concerns, needs, resources and best

practices. The taskforce has also gathered information on current approaches and systems used by law enforcement and prosecution and opportunities for improvement. Subsequently, in April 2023, the Washington State Legislature funded a centralized Organized Retail Crime Unit in the Attorney General's Office to coordinate, investigate, and prosecute multi-jurisdictional retail crime statewide. The 10-person[13] Organized Retail Crime Unit will include investigators, prosecutors, a data analyst, and support staff. The unit will be able to assist with investigations, including coordinating them across multiple jurisdictions and prosecuting cases referred to the office by county prosecutors. City officials have been participating in the task force meetings, and the newly funded state unit will offer the City of Seattle new opportunities for collaboration and for leveraging resources to address ORC.

Washington Organized Retail Crime Association. There are 35 statewide Organized Retail Crime Associations (ORCAs) in the U.S., including the Washington Organized Retail Crime Association (WAORCA). The primary purpose of an ORCA is to assist law enforcement, retail investigators, and prosecutors in identifying, investigating, and prosecuting those involved in ORC. WAORCA sponsors a number of quarterly and monthly meetings around the state, including a King County meeting and a virtual meeting. Participants at these local meetings share intelligence, coordinate investigations, identify suspects,

Image: The Economic Crimes Unit from the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office presents at a WAORCA meeting. Source: WAORCA

identify fencing operations, and build working relationships. Businesses of any size may apply to participate in WAORCA, and WAORCA also provides free training for small businesses (see Step 5: Use Place-Based Approaches to Disrupt Street Markets in our report). Staff from the City Attorney's Office and from the SPD North Precinct attend WAORCA meetings and provide updates on SPD ORC cases.

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[13] The Legislature funded half of these positions to start on July 1, 2023, and the other half to start on July 1, 2024.

The Downtown Security Forum. An example of SPD's leadership in ongoing problem-solving among agencies is the Downtown Security Forum (DSF) that brings together property managers and security and loss-prevention professionals with SPD West Precinct command to share updates and problem solve crime and other issues negatively impacting people and assets in West Precinct business districts. The DSF was established over four years ago, and there are currently over 180 contacts on the DSF distribution list. The DSF is co-hosted by the SPD West Precinct Crime Prevention Coordinator and the Downtown Seattle Association's Metropolitan Improvement District's Safety Services Manager. The DSF meets six times a year or as needed. In addition, the DSF hosts educational forums[14] that allow more time to discuss topics that affect crime and safety in West Precinct business districts.

Vibrant Communities Initiative. In May 2023, the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office (KCPAO) was selected as a pilot agency for a new program sponsored by the Retail Industry Leaders Association and National District Attorneys Association called the Vibrant Communities Initiative. This program is intended "to address root drivers of habitual theft, violence, and other unlawful activity in and around retail establishments—mental health issues, substance use, homelessness, and other complex societal challenges." KCPAO's national leadership on this new program will provide the City of Seattle with an opportunity to collaborate with KCPAO on innovative systems changes.

**Centralized coordination from the City is needed.**

Currently, City of Seattle representatives participate in all the collaborative efforts described above. However, we observed that the City staff participation is diffuse (see Exhibit 5), and there is no City structure in place for communication and coordination among City staff involved with ORC. The City might be better positioned to make more effective use of City participation in these collaborations if there were centralized coordination from the City. This might include a designated central point of contact for the City on ORC, a shared list of City contacts on ORC, and a central City repository (e.g., SharePoint site) for ORC information.

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[14] DSF educational forum topics for 2023 include: best practice tips for security camera systems and video evidence; crime prevention through environmental design for safer places; place-based crime prevention; tips for exterior lighting in urban business districts.

Exhibit 5: City Staff Participation in ORC Collaborations is Diffuse

Collaborative Group	City Staff Participation Noted
Homeland Security Investigations	• SPD Intelligence Unit
Attorney General's ORC Task Force	• SPD Command staff • SPD Major Crimes Unit • City Attorney leadership
WAORCA	• SPD North Precinct Patrol staff • SPD Southwest Precinct Crime Prevention staff • City Attorney North Precinct Liaison
Downtown Security Forum	• SPD West Precinct staff

Source: Seattle Office of City Auditor.
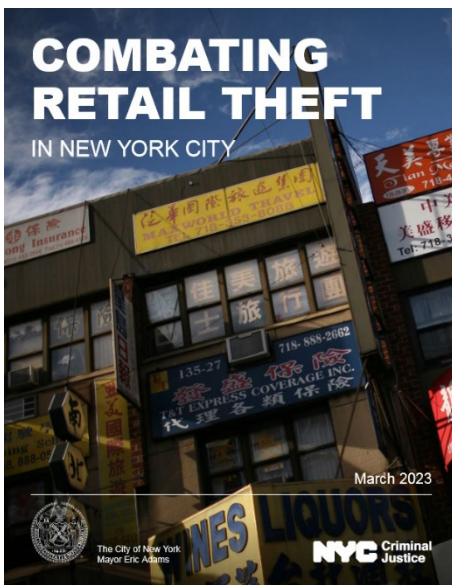
Central coordination could help the City make the best use of its current staff involvement in these collaborations so that information gathered at these meetings can be operationalized into the City's work on ORC.

Central City coordination could also help the City more effectively set and communicate its priorities for ORC. For example, in December 2022, New York City Mayor Eric Adams convened more than 70 stakeholders "to collaborate on policy and find creative solutions to the prevalent increases in retail theft." A subsequent report (left) published by the Mayor identified six priorities for addressing retail theft in New York City:

1. Creating targeted retail theft diversion programs
2. Bringing support services closer to our retail communities
3. Building stronger, safer unified retail communities
4. Prioritizing the use of precision enforcement when appropriate
5. Launching a strategic task force against retail theft
6. Advocating for stronger online marketplace authentication procedures to ensure consumer safety and deter organized theft rings.

Recommendation 1

The City should explore ways to improve coordination among City staff who participate in organized retail crime (ORC) collaborations, including designating a central point of contact on ORC, creating a shared list of City contacts on ORC, and developing a central City repository for ORC information.

STEP 2: LEVERAGE FEDERAL AND STATE CRIME ANALYSIS RESOURCES

Section Summary

Applying crime analysis to organized retail crime (ORC) investigations could help the City identify fencing operations and gather evidence for prosecution. The City of Seattle can seek support with crime analysis from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), which offers analytic services for local law enforcement for ORC, as well as from the Washington State Attorney General Office's new ORC unit. In addition, the City should consider using federal technical assistance to build its capacity to use the problem-oriented-policing model to address ORC fencing operations.

Crime analysis can support ORC investigations.

SPD has indicated that staffing constraints prevent the organization from investigating fencing operations and conducting thorough analysis of ORC. Crime analysis[15] involves analyzing the identified crime problem in-depth using a variety of data sources so that appropriate responses can be developed. Law enforcement and industry experts note the importance of crime analysis to help identify trends and patterns that could lead to successful ORC investigations. This type of crime analysis might include mapping ORC locations, identifying trends in frequently fenced items, analyzing data from interviews, phones, and social media to collect evidence on fencing operations, and analyzing financial data related to fencing operations. For example, the San Francisco Police Department monitors and analyzes online resale platforms like eBay and OfferUp to identify local fences.

Washington State Attorney General's ORC Unit and Homeland Security Investigations can offer crime analysis assistance for ORC.

The City can request assistance with ORC crime analysis from the Washington State Attorney General's Office and HSI. The new ORC unit in the Washington State Attorney General's Office will include a data analyst and several investigators. This unit may have some capacity to provide crime analysis assistance to SPD regarding fencing operations.

HSI has a team that can lend analytical assistance to SPD for ORC fencing cases. In 2022, HSI's National Lead Development Center (NLDC) began acting as an information and analytics clearinghouse for HSI's Operation Boiling Point. NLDC accepts leads on ORC cases from a wide range of sources that include federal, state, and local law

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[15] The U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office defines crime analysis as "the qualitative and quantitative study of crime and law enforcement information in combination with socio-demographic and spatial factors to apprehend criminals, prevent crime, reduce disorder, and evaluate organizational procedures."

enforcement contacts; foreign law enforcement; and retail loss-prevention professionals.[16]

NLDC analytical resources are available to SPD and could be useful for addressing the known major fencing operations, especially those with international ties. SPD is particularly well-positioned to request analytical services from the NLDC because an SPD detective from the SPD Intelligence Unit is detailed to and co-located with HSI and could liaise with the NLDC as needed.

Free technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice could help.

In addition, the federal government has resources, including free technical assistance, that could help the City build its capacity to apply problem-oriented-policing (POP) strategies to address ORC fencing operations. Analysis is an important component of POP. Decades of research has shown strong and consistent evidence that POP is an effective strategy for reducing crime and disorder. POP requires police to use problem-solving to address chronic problems, rather than using traditional reactive efforts. POP interventions commonly use the SARA (scanning, analysis, response, assessment) model to identify problems, carefully analyze the conditions contributing to the problem, develop a tailored response to target these underlying factors, and evaluate outcome effectiveness. POP has been effectively[17] used to address a range of crime types, including violent crimes and property crime, including retail theft.

Although POP has existed since the 1980s, SPD has not systematically implemented it. In fact, SPD's lack of experience with POP was seen as a limiting factor in a federally funded pilot project designed to address two downtown Seattle crime hot spots (Gill, et al., 2018).

SPD is aware of four major fencing operations in Seattle, including one that is operating out of a fast-food business. SPD indicated that due to staffing constraints, especially in SPD investigative units, the department's ability to investigate these fencing operations is extremely limited. However, POP would be well-suited to address ORC fencing operations, especially those with a known location.

Free technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice could help SPD build its capacity to apply POP techniques to address ORC

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[16] The NLDC is responsible for producing high-quality criminal referrals and case support for the various HSI field offices across the country. The NLDC is comprised of trained special agents, criminal analysts, and task force officers who evaluate referrals and develop investigative case materials for ORC cases. Some of the analytic tools they use include financial analysis, forensic auditing, and open-source analytics. Once they have received and evaluated the case lead and developed case materials, the NLDC shares the materials with the local HSI office and works to ensure the case is accepted by a U.S. Attorney. The NLDC then tracks and supports the case through prosecution. The NLDC has existing agreements with many foreign-based law enforcement agencies and can help local law enforcement identify organized retail crime rings from foreign countries that are operating in U.S. cities.

[17] A 2020 meta-analysis of 34 studies of POP found a statistically significant 34 percent reduction in crime and disorder in the POP treatment areas compared to the control sites (Hickle, Weisburd, Telep, & Peterson, 2020).

fencing operations. For example, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office maintains a clearinghouse of information on POP. In addition, the Bureau of Justice Assistance offers consultation and short-term technical assistance to local governments and law enforcement agencies that includes implementing evidence-based programs, such as POP.

Recommendation 2

The City should make a coordinated and prioritized request(s) to the Washington State Attorney General and Homeland Security Investigations for assistance with organized retail crime fencing crime analysis.

Recommendation 3

The City should consider using free technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice to begin to apply problem-oriented-policing techniques to address known organized retail crime fencing operations.

STEP 3: USE IN-CUSTODY INTERVIEWS OF BOOSTERS TO GATHER INFORMATION ON FENCES

Section Summary

Interviews with boosters are an important source of information for identifying and investigating fencing operations. However, SPD does not currently conduct in-custody interviews with boosters due to resource constraints. We learned that staff from other law enforcement agencies are available to assist SPD with booster interviews.

Interviews with boosters can provide important information about fencing operations.

Many retailers have adopted policies that prohibit staff from detaining and questioning people who steal merchandise. Therefore, there are fewer opportunities for retail staff to gather information about how stolen goods are resold. Consequently, police interactions with these suspects have taken on new importance for gathering information, particularly information about how the goods are intended to be resold. Even if a booster is initially reluctant to provide information about the fencing operations, there are proven techniques that can yield helpful intelligence for investigators, such as asking open-ended questions (e.g., "Could you tell me about what happens with the product after you leave the store?").[18]

Law enforcement staff from other jurisdictions stressed the importance of gathering information from boosters regarding fencing operations. One police sergeant from a jurisdiction in Snohomish County who has experience conducting ORC interviews said:

> *"Every (retail theft) is an opportunity to get law enforcement pointed in the right direction, or at least to confirm information. One conversation between an individual (booster) and a patrol officer can have a huge impact. This information can then be passed on to investigators or crime analysis."*

SPD does not conduct interviews with boosters to obtain information on fencing operations.

In addition, several law enforcement staff from other jurisdictions indicated that they are often able to obtain data from the boosters' phones as another source of information to help identify the ORC network and fencing operations.

Our analysis of the 49 Organized Retail Theft cases referred by SPD to the King County Prosecuting Attorney in 2021-2022 indicated that very little information is gathered about how the stolen goods are resold. Except for the four cases in which the boosters were themselves selling

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[18] The Problem-Oriented Policing Guide on Stolen Goods Markets, produced by the U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office, includes an appendix containing ORC interview questions.

the stolen goods, there were no indications in the case files that SPD collected information on the fencing operations related to these cases. SPD has indicated that it lacks resources to conduct in-custody interviews for ORC.

By not conducting interviews with boosters, the City is missing opportunities to learn more about the fences these boosters work for. This information could be helpful in investigations and prosecutions of fencing operations. In addition, the City is missing opportunities to learn more about Seattle businesses that are buying stolen goods[19] wittingly or unwittingly. This information would better help the City target certain businesses or areas to provide educational outreach about the risks associated with purchasing and reselling stolen items (for example, items with altered expiration dates could pose public health problems).

Other law enforcement agencies can assist SPD with interviews.

We learned from our interviews that Homeland Security Investigations personnel are available to assist with interviews with boosters. In addition, other local law enforcement agencies might also be available to conduct interviews with boosters. For example, in 2022, at the urging of a loss-prevention staff person from a Northgate mall retailer, a sergeant from the Lynnwood Police Department was brought in to conduct in-custody interviews of boosters to learn more about the fencing operations underpinning the thefts at their store.

Recommendation 4

The City should explore opportunities for other law enforcement agencies to assist with conducting and documenting booster interviews for the purpose of gathering information on organized retail crime fencing operations.

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[19] For example, in one of the cases prosecuted in 2022 involved a person who was stealing liquor from downtown retailer and reselling the liquor to businesses in Pioneer Square for $10 per bottle.

STEP 4: EXPLORE NEW USES OF TECHNOLOGY TO ADDRESS ORC

Section Summary

Retailers' use of SPD's current Retail Theft Program has declined in recent years, and there are barriers to participation in the program by small businesses and retailers without dedicated loss-prevention staff. As the City considers replacing its existing Retail Theft Program, it will be important to consider potential new technologies, such as rapid video response. Retailers have made investments in technology that could be helpful to the City in investigating ORC fencing.

SPD's current Retail Theft Program is ineffective and inefficient for both retailers and SPD.

Reports of retail crime to law enforcement are crucial to the City's ability to address ORC, including fencing operations. However, retailers' use of SPD's current Retail Theft Program has declined in recent years, and there are barriers to participation in the program by small businesses and retailers without dedicated loss-prevention staff.

SPD's Retail Theft Program (RTP) was developed in 1989 to allow retailers to file misdemeanor theft or criminal trespass cases without patrol involvement. In lieu of reporting a misdemeanor theft or criminal trespass to SPD, the RTP participants notify SPD in writing by filing a Security Incident Report. There is one detective in SPD's General Investigations Unit assigned to the RTP whose duties include following up on the reports from retailers, referring cases for prosecution, conducting additional data gathering in the field, providing technical assistance to the loss-prevention staff, and participating in collaborative groups including the Washington Organized Retail Crime Association (WAORCA) and the Downtown Security Forum.

According to SPD, the program was intended to save time for the retail companies, eliminating the need to wait for police follow-up at the scene, and free up police resources for other types of response. SPD acknowledges that there has been a decline in participation in RTP in recent years, and a rise in SPD calls for service from retailers. SPD's 2022 RTP report to the City Council Public Safety and Human Services Committee indicated that (as of February 2022) there were 63 store chains signed up for the program, and 158 retail loss-prevention officers had recently submitted reports through RTP.

SPD indicated a potential reason for the decline in use of the RTP is that, due to liability issues, some retailers' policies preclude staff from interacting with individuals who are stealing merchandise. Indeed, due to legal concerns and safety concerns for employees, it has become common among many retailers to prohibit employees from interacting

with or detaining an individual who is stealing. Further, SPD's Security Incident Report includes fields for information on the suspect— including name, address, and driver's license number—which would require retail staff to interact with the suspect. While it is possible for retailers to submit a Security Incident Report without identifying the suspect, this may not be a worthwhile time investment for retailers. Our review of 2021-2022 ORC case files indicates that, in lieu of identifying suspects by detaining them, some loss-prevention staff identify suspects by comparing store video footage with previous jail booking photos. In addition, loss-prevention staff, law enforcement, and prosecutors work together during WAORCA meetings to try to identify unknown suspects based on retail video footage.

Nonetheless, missing information regarding suspects can hamper investigations and is problematic for SPD data reporting. SPD officials indicated that even when retailers complete the Security Incident Reports and include suspect information, there is a lack of consistency in the information provided, rendering it unusable for SPD reporting purposes.

Some retailers we interviewed indicated that the RTP was very cumbersome to use, especially for their loss-prevention staff who are transferred in and out of Seattle store locations or whose positions turn over regularly. It is important to note that participation in the RTP is limited to retailers large enough to have loss-prevention staff. [20] We found that SPD's 47-page RTP Manual has not been updated since January 2013,[21] and it contains outdated information including contact information for the SPD Retail Theft Program Detective. While SPD indicated that they have updated the RTP to include online reporting, our analysis of 2021-2022 case files referred to the King County Prosecuting Attorney for prosecution showed that some retail loss-prevention staff continue to provide evidence (e.g., sending a USB flash drive with photos, witness statements, and video footage) via U.S. mail.

The Mayor's Office and SPD leadership have indicated that they are considering replacing all of SPD's online reporting systems, including the Retail Theft Program. As SPD explores alternatives for replacing the Retail Theft Program, it should consider emerging technologies, such as rapid video response, which would allow near-instant response to retail crimes, provide greater consistency in reporting, and could

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[20] This precludes small Seattle businesses from participation. As noted by one small business owner at the November 20, 2022 Attorney General ORC Task Force meeting, filling out police reports is time-consuming and there might be a language barrier for some small businesses that prevents online reporting. SPD has indicated that the RTP has not yet has not been analyzed with the City's Racial Equity Toolkit. SPD noted that this type of analysis may be difficult to perform because participating RTP retailers do not consistently include information on race and ethnicity in their reports.

[21] SPD has indicated that there is a 2017 update for this manual. However, the 2017 updated manual was not made available to us in time for publication of this report.

potentially lead to efficiencies in ORC investigations, including information-gathering on fencing operations.

Rapid video response is an emerging technology that could be helpful to ORC reporting and investigations

Rapid video response is an emerging technology that allows 911 callers, for certain non-urgent calls, to be connected to a police officer or medic through a virtual platform rather than receiving the traditional in-person response. Rapid video response was pioneered by the Kent Police Department in England[22] and is now being deployed throughout England.
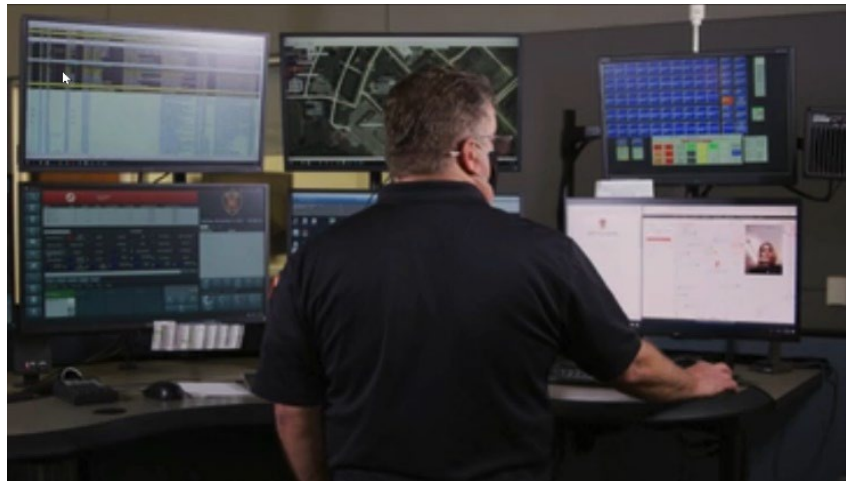

Image: The San Antonio Fire Department is currently using rapid video response to respond to low-priority medical calls for service. See this video description. Source: San Antonio Fire Department

In the U.S., rapid video response has been deployed by the San Antonio Fire Department for low-priority medical calls for service. The goals of the rapid video response program are to provide callers with the appropriate amount of care while conserving valuable fire department equipment and vehicles and keeping emergency responders available for critical incidents.[23]

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[22] Kent Police is a large county force in the southeast of the United Kingdom. It protects and serves an estimated population of 1.87 million across metropolitan centers, towns, villages, and rural hamlets with approximately 7,000 police officers and civilian staff. Kent Police used rapid video response to respond to domestic abuse calls. A rigorous impact evaluation found that the average rapid video response time of three minutes was 656 times faster than the average patrol response time. Rapid video response resulted in significantly greater victim satisfaction and resulted in higher arrest rates of offenders. The evaluation also found that trust and confidence in the police improves more for victims receiving rapid video response versus those who received the patrol response. Based on these positive evaluation findings, rapid video response is now being deployed throughout England.

[23] San Antonio Fire dispatchers follow a protocol for referring callers with mild complaints to a clinical dispatcher who then verifies the non-critical nature of the call. If the call is verified as non-critical, the clinical dispatchers send the caller a link to an app that allows for audio and video, allowing the clinical dispatcher to see the caller and retrieve the caller's pulse rate from the app. The clinical dispatcher assesses whether the patient should go to the hospital and offers guidance but can still call for an ambulance if the patient requests one. They can also offer the patient a taxi voucher to go to the emergency room later.

Retail theft calls for service that are not urgent might be a good application for rapid video response in Seattle. It could shorten response times and potentially reduce the amount of SPD Patrol Unit Service Hours spent responding to calls for service from retailers. Further, the rapid video response technology could also allow retailers to easily upload their video and images at the time of the call. Since reporting would be done through the police, there could also be greater consistency in reporting metrics under rapid video response.

Greater consistency in reporting and faster police response to retail theft calls could help the City gather evidence more quickly and efficiently to support investigations of ORC fencing. A rigorous impact evaluation of rapid video response, like the one conducted in the U.K., could help the City understand the potential benefits of rapid video response for addressing ORC.

Recommendation 5

As the City considers replacing the current Retail Theft Program technology, it should consider using emerging technology, such as rapid video response to help address organized retail crime.

Large retailers have invested in technology that could be beneficial to the City to gather evidence on ORC fencing operations.

In the past two decades, large retailers have made significant investments in their loss-prevention departments, including investments in technology. The City of Seattle could benefit from some of these investments by collaborating with retailers to investigate ORC fencing operations.

For example, Walmart and Target run digital forensic laboratories that are accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors. Target has two labs staffed with forensic professionals, including former law enforcement officers. The labs can perform analyses that could be helpful to ORC fencing investigations, including video, image, and audio analysis, and latent fingerprint analysis. In fact, some of Target's forensic work is done pro bono on behalf of local law enforcement.

In addition, some retailers have invested in RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology. RFID technology allows retailers to track individual products from the point of manufacture to the point of sale. This can help retailers identify and track stolen merchandise and prevent it from being resold on the black market. Further, Homeland Security Investigations' National Lead Development Center has the ability to inspect outbound international shipments for known RFID tags that are associated with stolen merchandise.

Recommendation 6

The City should explore leveraging pro bono technology services from retailers in its investigations of organized retail crime fencing.

Note: New Technology to Discourage Product Theft and Validate Authentic Purchases

While this audit does not specifically address advances to deter certain types of retail theft, it should be noted that some retailers are making investments in technology that could make stolen products unusable. For example, Lowe's has begun installing RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) chips in power tools that make them inoperable unless they are legitimately purchased. Lowe's is also using blockchain technology to create an anonymous public record of purchase that can be used by retailers and law enforcement to validate authentic purchase of the product.

STEP 5: USE PLACE-BASED APPROACHES TO DISRUPT STREET MARKETS

Section Summary

Research shows numerous place-based strategies are effective in reducing crime. Place-based strategies can be led by non-police agencies and can be applied to address illegal street markets where organized retail crime (ORC) fences sell stolen goods. The City has experience with community-led, place-based crime prevention that could be applied to locations where illegal street markets occur. Local retail organizations can provide guidance and training to small businesses and neighborhood businesses on place-based strategies to address ORC.

Some ORC fences sell stolen goods at illegal street markets in Seattle.

Goods stolen by ORC boosters are sometimes resold by ORC fences and/or their associates at illegal street markets. SPD indicated that in recent years, they have run operations to disrupt street markets in Belltown and at 12th and Jackson. However, these street markets often return, including at the same location.

The criminal activity in and around these illegal street markets is problematic for local businesses and community members. For example, Quynh Phan, the executive director of Friends of Little Saigon, expressed concerns about 12th and Jackson during a February 2022 meeting of the Seattle City Council's Economic Development, Technology, and City Light Committee.

"The issues at 12th & Jackson are very complex. I have to say it's a combination of various people from very diverse backgrounds from places outside of the neighborhood, but also people from our community, and so we feel like we're in this place where we don't know what to do anymore, and businesses want to take matters into their own hands, and I fear for their lives." - Quynh Phan, Friends of Little Saigon

The City Has experience with community-led, place-based crime prevention.

SPD indicated that illegal street markets where stolen goods are sold occur repeatedly along certain streets in neighborhoods including Belltown, Little Saigon, and downtown. Since these illegal street markets are place-based, it would be appropriate for the City to leverage its experience with place-based crime prevention by supporting community-led, place-based efforts directed at these specific areas.

Place-based crime prevention involves disrupting crime at small geographic locations, like intersections or parks, by making changes to

the physical environment such as increasing street lighting, remediating a vacant lot, or by implementing strategies to change the behavior patterns among the people who use the space. Place-based interventions also can include increasing guardianship at a location, such as schools and parking lots. By their very nature, many place-based interventions require collaboration among property owners, community members, government agencies, and other stakeholders.

Image: Members of the Safe Passage Team from the Boys and Girls Clubs of King County provide extra guardianship around schools in Rainier Beach, ensuring that youth get safely to their after-school destinations. Source: Annie O'Neal for Rainier Beach: A Beautiful Safe Place for Youth.

A significant body of research[24] has shown that these place-based approaches are effective for responding to and preventing violent crime and property crime. The City of Seattle has gained experience in place-based community-led approaches to reducing crime through a decade of work in Seattle's Rainier Beach neighborhood. Evaluations[25] of the community-led, place-based efforts in Rainier Beach have also been shown to be effective in reducing crime at the specific locations where the interventions were directed. In spite of the City's experience with place-based approaches in Rainer Beach, the City has not systematically implemented place-based approaches in other Seattle neighborhoods.

An SPD report identified 68 place-based strategies for 12th and Jackson.

An excellent candidate for the City to consider for supporting another community-led, place-based approach to crime prevention is at the 12th and Jackson intersection. In September 2022, at the request of community organizations, the Seattle Police Department prepared a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)[26] report for the 12th and Jackson intersection of the Little Saigon neighborhood that provided 68 recommendations to reduce incidents of crime and disorder, including illegal street markets (See Exhibit 6). Three[27] of the 68 items have been completed to date. More attention and

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[24] See, for example, (Eck & Guerette, 2012) and (Hohl, et al., 2019).

[25] See the quasi-experimental 2016 evaluation of Rainier Beach: A Beautiful Safe Place for Youth (Gill, Vitter, & Weisburd, 2016) and the 2023 evaluation of the Rainier Beach Campus Safety Continuum (Gill, McPherson, Zheng, & Gross Shader, 2023).

[26] Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is an often-implemented place-based strategy for preventing crime and reducing fear of crime that focuses on the design of or changes to the built environment. See this description of CPTED on SPD's website.

[27] Follow-up action items to date for the 12th and Jackson CPTED report include: City Light repaired 13 out streetlights, added four streetlights to under-lit street/sidewalk segments to improve visibility and safety. The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) urban forestry pruned low tree canopies and cleared brush from the pedestrian right of way to improve sight lines and safety. SDOT partnered with Friends of Little Saigon to wrap utility cabinets that are repeatedly hit by graffiti taggers, moved traffic signs obstructed by trees, and addressed multiple pedestrian hazards.

coordination from the City are needed to complete the remaining items. For example, some of these items will require collaboration with business owners and with other agencies (e.g., Seattle Parks and Recreation, King County Metro).

Exhibit 6: SPD's Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Report for 12th and Jackson Includes Recommendations That Will Require City Coordination

Figure 4: Observed areas of concentrated criminal and nuisance activity: Purple outline indicates locations where drug use and sales and other nuisance behaviors was concentrated in 2021 and early 2022. After Chu Minh building owners fenced off their property in late summer 2021)SW corner of 12thAve S./S Jackson), the open drug market activity migrated to the SE corner of the intersection, adding to the milieu of black market street vending in front of Khang Hoa Duong Grocery, Ding How Center and the adjacent bus stop and public sidewalk. KC Metro Transit relocated the bus stop (orange bus icon) for transit rider and operator safety to the SW corner of S Jackson in Feb 2022

Note how the drug nuisance behaviors overlaps with Metro Transit stops (Yellow Metro Bus Shelter icon. Street car icon also in yellow). The blue outline shows areas where open drug sales and use persists.

Source: SPD Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Report. Sept. 2022

Recommendation 7

The City should leverage its experience with place-based crime prevention to address illegal street markets where stolen goods are fenced. This should include supporting the completion of Seattle Police Department's place-based recommendations for the 12th and Jackson intersection.

There are some resources available to Seattle retailers that may be helpful with place-based strategies to address ORC.

There are some resources available to Seattle retailers that may be helpful with place-based strategies to address ORC. For example, retailers can schedule a security assessment with SPD to receive practical ideas on burglary/theft prevention and workplace safety.

In addition, the Washington Retail Association recently published a Guide to Navigating Public Safety and Retail Crime that includes information on recognizing the signs that a business is being surveilled for a potential retail crime, implementing best practices to discourage thieves from targeting a business, protecting staff, customers, and inventory, and the steps to take in the aftermath of a retail crime. The Washington Organized Retail Crime Association offers free training for small businesses that includes:

- Investigation basics (e.g., building a case, filing cases with police, witness statements)
- Employee safety
- Environmental site hardening (e.g., product protection, camera selection and placement)

For some small businesses, there may be barriers to accessing these resources. Some potential ways to reduce these barriers might include providing translation, coordinating trainings for multiple businesses, and identifying resources to offset business costs for staff time to participate in these trainings.

Recommendation 8

To help address organized retail crime, the City should explore ways to reduce barriers for small businesses to participate in crime prevention trainings.

STEP 6: FOLLOW THE "PROSECUTION CHECKLIST" FOR ORC CASES

Section Summary

Successful prosecution of organized retail crime (ORC) cases requires good communication about the details of a case between the prosecutor and law enforcement. Despite recent efforts by the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office (KCPAO) to identify for SPD the elements needed for prosecution of ORC cases, some SPD ORC investigation reports are missing those elements. This creates process delays and could affect case outcomes.

Some SPD ORC investigation reports are missing information needed for prosecution.

While the KCPAO has always prosecuted retail crimes as part of its general felony prosecution practice, in June 2021 the office designated a specific Deputy Prosecuting Attorney to work full time on these cases.[28] In 2022, the KCPAO indicated that they filed more than 140 felony cases involving retail theft, a significant increase over previous years. These cases often involve multiple codefendants and/or multiple incidents per defendant. KCPAO prosecutors, including the full-time Retail Crimes Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, regularly attend ORC collaborations (see Step 1 of this report) and are available to provide trainings to law enforcement on ORC cases and the use of the checklist. As the King County Prosecuting Attorney recently noted, "economic crimes are often very difficult to prove, and they're often very difficult to investigate. We can be a resource to law enforcement, and we can be on the same page with law enforcement so that we can get better outcomes."

Case files submitted by law enforcement must clearly communicate the details of the case and sufficiently document evidence. However, interviews with KCPAO staff indicated that ORC cases referred to them by SPD were often missing information required for successful prosecution. To address the issue of information missing from ORC case files, in November 2022, KCPAO developed a checklist of information needed from law enforcement for successful prosecution of ORC cases. KCPAO circulated the checklist to the law enforcement agencies in King County, including SPD. The checklist includes detailed guidance on what would constitute sufficient proof of the defendant's identity, what the defendant stole or attempted to steal, and the value of the items as well as additional information that would be helpful for prosecution.

We reviewed five Organized Retail Theft cases that SPD had filed after receiving the KCPAO checklist (i.e., between December 1, 2022 and April

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[28] The full-time Retail Crimes Deputy Prosecuting Attorney position was initially housed in the Economic Crimes Unit within the Criminal Division. However, in early 2023, KCPAO created a new Economic Crimes and Wage Theft Division to provide a unified focus and approach to economic crimes cases—including retail crimes—and to bring greater accountability to those who commit them. KCPAO's Economic Crimes Unit is now housed within that new division.

5, 2023) and found that all five cases were missing information described in the checklist. Further, the KCPAO database showed that all five cases were on hold pending receipt of missing information. KCPAO indicated that they would be willing to meet with and train SPD detectives in the use of the checklist or to create an online training module for SPD.

Note: Forthcoming SPD Investigations Study Could Inform Approach to ORC

While this audit did not include an in-depth review of SPD's ORC investigations, a forthcoming study of SPD's investigative practices could inform further opportunities for improved ORC investigations. In 2022, the Executive engaged a team from the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy at George Mason University to conduct an evidence-assessment of SPD's investigative work. This study will include ORC investigations. The purpose of the study is to see if SPD investigative practices are aligned with the research and offer opportunities for improvement. The report is scheduled to be completed in mid-2023.

Recommendation 9

The City should request that King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office train Seattle Police Department (SPD) Detectives and their supervising Sergeants in the use of the organized retail crime prosecution checklist. This should include soliciting any feedback from SPD on obstacles faced in using the checklist or ideas for process improvements.

STEP 7: CONSIDER CITY SUPPORT OF LEGISLATION THAT ADDRESSES ORC

Section Summary

Legislation at the federal and state levels could help address ORC fencing operations by regulating online marketplaces and by dedicating more resources to ORC enforcement, investigations, and prosecution. Opportunities for strengthening ORC-related legislation will not occur unless there's political support from stakeholders, such as the City of Seattle.

Federal and state legislation can help the City address ORC fencing operations.

Federal legislation. The Integrity, Notification, and Fairness in Online Market Retail Marketplaces for Consumers Act (INFORM Act) is intended to help deter the online sale of counterfeit goods by anonymous sellers and prevent ORC rings from stealing items from stores to resell those items online. INFORM became law on December 29, 2022 and has a compliance deadline for online marketplace operators and sellers of June 27, 2023. INFORM imposes new requirements on online marketplaces to collect, verify, and disclose certain information[29] from high-volume third-party sellers[30]. In addition, INFORM requires that online marketplace operators must provide a reporting mechanism that allows for electronic and telephone reporting of suspicious marketplace activity to the online marketplace. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is charged with enforcing the INFORM Act's requirements, and violations by an online marketplace will be treated as an unfair or deceptive act or practice under U.S. Code. The INFORM Act also authorizes state attorneys general to bring civil actions for any violation of INFORM that affects residents of their state.

In addition, the Combating Organized Retail Crime Act, was introduced in the U.S. House and Senate earlier this year. It would establish an ORC Coordination Center in the Department of Homeland Security's Homeland Security Investigations. The ORC Coordination Center will coordinate all federal law enforcement activities related to ORC, establish relationships with state and local law enforcement agencies, retailers, and retail organizations, and assist state and local law enforcement agencies with their investigations of ORC groups.

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[29] For example, online marketplace operations must collect and verify bank account numbers, contact information, tax ID, email address, and phone numbers for high volume sellers.

[30] High volume sellers are defined as vendors with more than 200 transactions and $5,000 is sales revenue in a year.

State legislation. A proposed [Washington State Senate bill 5259 – 2023-24,](#)[31] which sets certain guidelines for the Retail Theft Task Force in the Attorney General's Office includes new requirements for reporting ORC to law enforcement agencies, and provides tax relief for retailers and cannabis shops to pay for physical security improvements. For retailers, the proposed Business and Occupation Tax Credit equals the amount the business spent on physical security improvements[32] in the previous four quarters, up to $3,000. This bill was initiated by the State Senate Labor and Commerce Committee and was referred to the State Senate Committee on Ways and Means in February 2023, but it did not pass out of committee during the recent legislative session.

Recommendation 10

The City should advocate for new state and federal legislation that could help address organized retail crime investigations and should seek opportunities for funding, technical assistance, or collaboration resulting from the legislation.

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[31] The proposed bill would require the Attorney General's ORC Task Force to work with retailers and retail associations to collect and aggregate data on incidents of organized retail theft. Further, it would require the Attorney General's Office to transmit this data to the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC), which must, in turn, transmit that information to the appropriate law enforcement agencies.

[32] Under this proposed bill, "physical security improvements" means physical improvements, additions, or other similar changes to a mercantile establishment exclusively for the purposes of preventing the theft of merchandise, including, but not limited to: security cameras; antitheft mirrors and signage; merchandising security equipment; locking display cases or display locks; electronic article surveillance; and storefront crash barriers or safety bollards.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

This audit does not address all aspects of ORC. Rather, based on preliminary fieldwork that we conducted in the spring of 2022, we decided to focus our analysis on fencing operations related to ORC (e.g., reselling stolen goods through online marketplaces, unregulated markets such as illegal street markets, storefronts that buy stolen goods, and shipping goods for sale outside of the U.S., etc.)

To accomplish the audit's objectives, we worked with representatives from law enforcement, prosecution, and retail to identify the seven steps presented in this report; we attended collaborative meetings, including the Washington State Attorney General ORC task force, and the Washington Organized Retail Crime Association; we reviewed Seattle Police Department records and case files; we analyzed prosecution data; we consulted with industry experts on best practices and reviewed research literature.

This audit was written by Claudia Gross Shader, PhD, with input from IB Osuntoki, Melissa Alderson, Nhi Tran, and David G. Jones. We received and incorporated input on this audit from reviewers in: the Seattle Police Department, Mayor's Office, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Washington State Attorney General's Office, U.S. Department of Homeland Security – Homeland Security Investigations, Washington Organized Retail Crime Association, and Washington Retail Association.

We would especially like to acknowledge Dr. Cynthia Lum, Director of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy, at George Mason University, and Dr. Cory Lowe, Senior Research Scientist, at the Loss Prevention Research Council, at the University of Florida, for their review and comments on a draft of this report.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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APPENDIX A

Seattle Police Department Response

City of Seattle
Seattle Police Department

July 7, 2023

Mr. David Jones, City Auditor
PO Box 94729
Seattle, WA 98124-4729

Dear Mr. Jones:

Thank you for including the Seattle Police Department in your review of the City of Seattle's Organized Retail Crime response. We appreciate your constructive recommendations and your acknowledgement that law enforcement, while essential, is only one part of the City's response to organized retail crime.

Many, if not most, of your recommendations call for action or collaboration in other city departments to increase place-based crime prevention, centering around CPTED principles, and development of technological solutions.

We agree this is the proper focus, especially as current staffing levels have greatly decreased SPD capacity to respond fully to this critical public safety need, and look forward to working with the City to implement these recommendations.

Sincerely,

Adrian Z. Diaz
Chief of Police

HM:lt

APPENDIX B

Top Cities/Metropolitan Areas Affected by Organized Retail Crime

Rank Order	FY 2021	FY 2020	FY 2019	FY 2018	FY 2017
1	CA – Los Angeles	CA – Los Angeles	CA – Los Angeles	CA – Los Angeles	NY – New York
2	CA – SF/Oakland	CA – SF/Oakland	IL – Chicago	NY – New York	CA – Los Angeles
3	NY – New York	IL – Chicago	FL – Miami	TX – Houston	FL – Miami
4	TX – Houston	NY – New York	NY – New York	IL – Chicago	IL – Chicago TX – Houston (tie)
5	FL – Miami	FL – Miami	CA – San Francisco	FL – Miami	CA – SF/Oakland
6	IL – Chicago	TX – Houston	MD – Baltimore	CA – SF/Oakland GA – Atlanta (tie)	GA – Atlanta
7	CA – Sacramento	GA – Atlanta	GA – Atlanta	MD – Baltimore PA – Philadelphia TX – Dallas Ft. Worth (tie)	MD – Baltimore
8	WA – Seattle	CA – Sacramento	Washington D.C.	CA – Sacramento	FL – Orlando
9	GA – Atlanta	MD – Baltimore	PA – Philadelphia	CA – Orange Co. NV – Las Vegas (tie)	NJ – Northern New Jersey Washington D.C. PA – Philadelphia TX – Dallas Ft. Worth (tie)
10	TX – Dallas Ft. Worth	NV – Las Vegas WA – Seattle (tie)	CA – Sacramento	CA – San Diego	FT – Ft. Lauderdale WA - Seattle

Source: 2022 National Retail Security Survey.

APPENDIX C

List of Recommendations

Step 1: Support City participation in collaborative efforts among agencies (e.g., including collaboration with the new Organized Retail Crime Unit in the Washington State Attorney General's Office).

Recommendation 1

The City should explore ways to improve coordination among City staff who participate in organized retail crime (ORC) collaborations, including designating a central point of contact on ORC, creating a shared list of City contacts on ORC, and developing a central City repository for ORC information.

Step 2: Leverage federal and state crime analysis resources.

Recommendation 2

The City should make a coordinated and prioritized request(s) to the Washington State Attorney General and Homeland Security Investigations for assistance with organized retail crime fencing crime analysis.

Recommendation 3

The City should consider using free technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice to begin to apply Problem-Oriented-Policing techniques to address known organized retail crime fencing operations.

Step 3: Use in-custody interviews of boosters to gather information on fencing operations.

Recommendation 4

The City should explore opportunities for other law enforcement agencies to assist with conducting and documenting booster interviews for the purpose of gathering information on organized retail crime fencing operations.

Step 4: Explore new uses of technology to address ORC.

Recommendation 5

As the City considers replacing the current Retail Theft Program technology, it should consider using emerging technology, such as rapid video response to help address organized retail crime.

Recommendation 6

The City should explore leveraging pro bono technology services from retailers in its investigations of organized retail crime fencing.

Step 5: Use place-based approaches to disrupt unregulated street markets.

Recommendation 7

The City should leverage its experience with place-based crime prevention to address illegal street markets where stolen goods are fenced. This should include supporting the completion of Seattle Police Department's place-based recommendations for the 12th and Jackson intersection.

Recommendation 8

To help address organized retail crime, the City should explore ways to reduce barriers for small businesses to participate in crime prevention trainings.

Step 6: Follow the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office 'prosecution checklist' for ORC cases.

Recommendation 9

The City should request that King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office train Seattle Police Department (SPD) Detectives and their supervising Sergeants in the use of the organized retail crime prosecution checklist. This should include soliciting any feedback from SPD on obstacles faced in using the checklist or ideas for process improvements.

Step 7: Consider City support of legislation that addresses ORC.

Recommendation 10

The City should advocate for new state and federal legislation that could help address organized retail crime investigations and should seek opportunities for funding, technical assistance, or collaboration resulting from the legislation.

APPENDIX D

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

Our Mission:

To help the City of Seattle achieve honest, efficient management and full accountability throughout City government. We serve the public interest by providing the City Council, Mayor and City department heads with accurate information, unbiased analysis, and objective recommendations on how best to use public resources in support of the well-being of Seattle residents.

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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Seattle WA 98124-4729
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www.seattle.gov/cityauditor

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

Pending, 74, 60%
Closed, 28, 23%
Implemented, 21, 17%
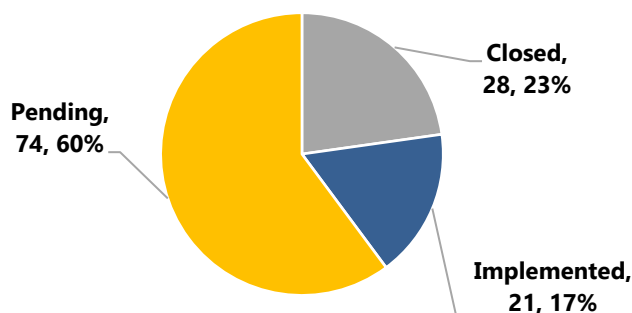
Check out our interactive dashboard for updates on all our recommendations:

(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.

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[1] See Appendix A.

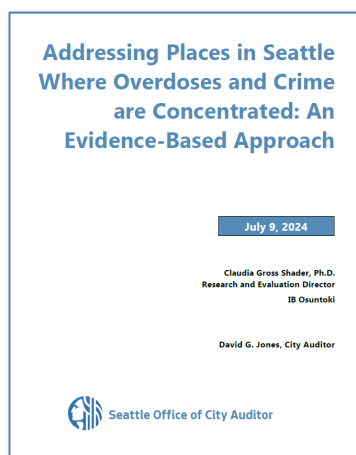# 2024 Recommendation Follow-up Report Highlights

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](#).

Addressing Places in Seattle Where Overdoses and Crime are Concentrated: An Evidence-Based Approach

July 9, 2024

Claudia Gross Shader, Ph.D.
Research and Evaluation Director
IB Osuntoki

David G. Jones, City Auditor

Seattle Office of City Auditor

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.
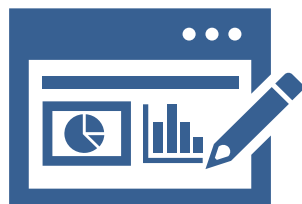
Encampments Dashboard

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.
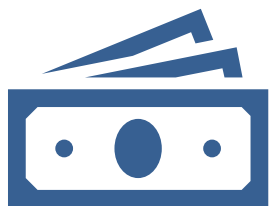
Seattle City Employees' Retirement System

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, 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).

APPENDIX A

Reports Included in the 2024 Annual Recommendation Follow-up Process

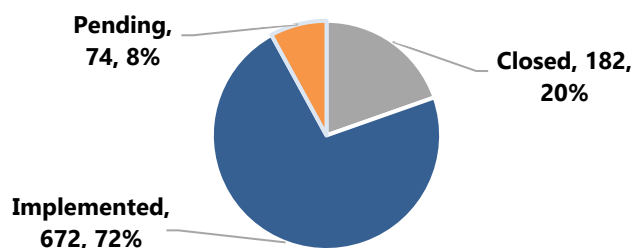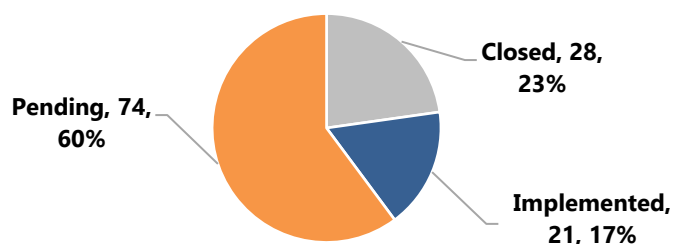|	Audit Title	Issue Date
1.	Addressing Places in Seattle Where Overdoses and Crime are Concentrated: An Evidence-Based Approach	7/9/2024
2.	Understanding Seattle's Housing Market Shift from Small to Large Rental Properties: A Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance Program Audit	12/21/2023
3.	City's 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

Pending, 74, 8%
Closed, 182, 20%
Implemented, 672, 72%

Recommendation Status as of December 31, 2024

Closed, 28, 23%
Pending, 74, 60%
Implemented, 21, 17%

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.

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

700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2410

Seattle WA 98124-4729

Ph: 206.233.3801

www.seattle.gov/cityauditor

How are we doing?

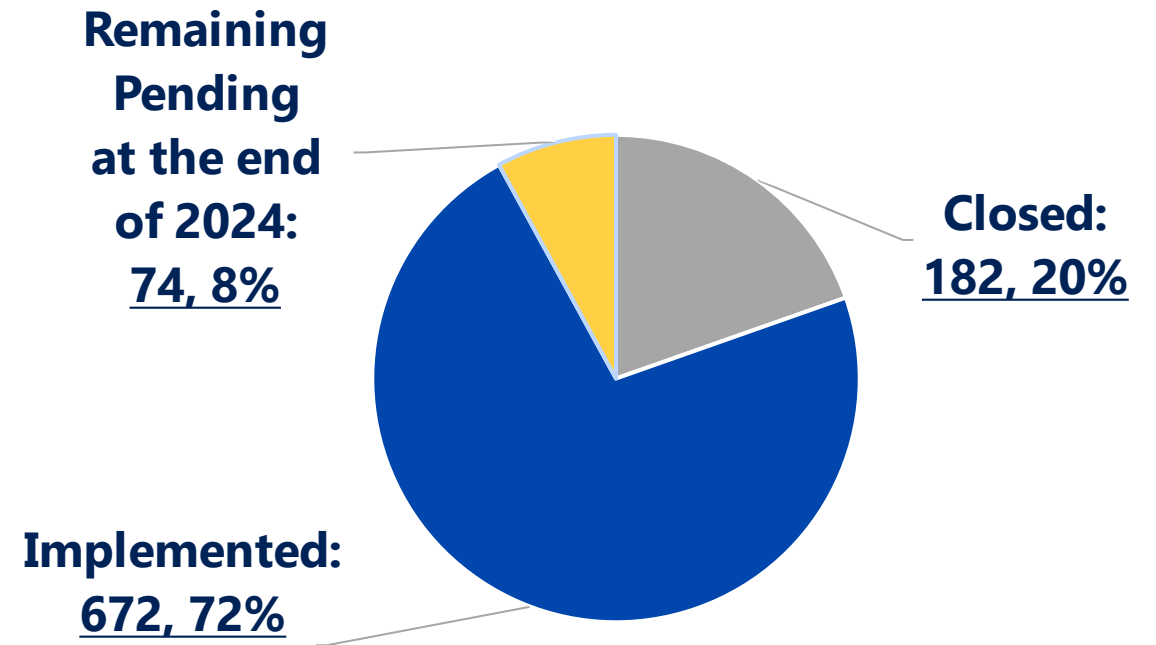**72% Overall Implementation Rate**

928 Total Recommendations 2007 – 2024

87 Reports

Seattle Office of City Auditor

All Office of City Auditor Recommendations 2007 – 2024

Remaining Pending at the end of 2024: **74, 8%**

Closed: **182, 20%**

Implemented: **672, 72%**

**https://www.seattle.gov/cityauditor**

Agenda

1. **Progress Made in 2024**

2. **Fully Implemented Reports**

3. **Pending Recommendations and Report Updates**

4. **Demo of City Auditor Dashboard**

Seattle Office of City Auditor

Check out our 2024 Annual Recommendation Follow-up Report and our interactive dashboard

Progress Made in 2024

We tracked the progress of 123 recommendations in 2024 21 were implemented
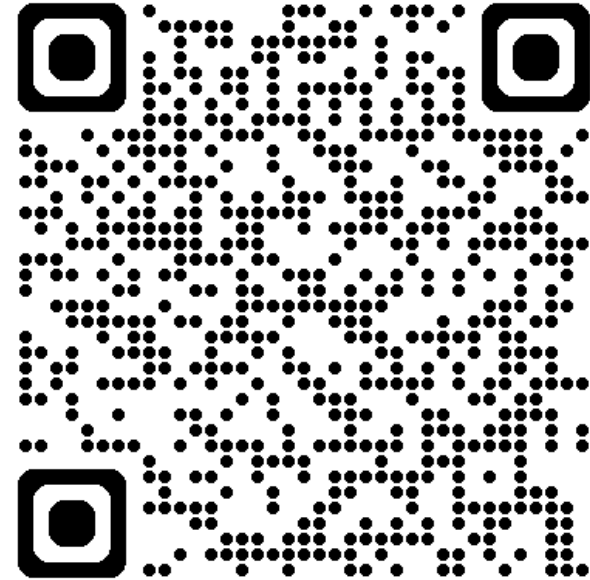
IMPLEMENTED:
The recommendation, or intent, has been met.

PENDING:
We will continue to follow up on these recommendations.

CLOSED:
Used when either the recommendation is no longer relevant; implementation is not feasible or will not occur.

Seattle Office of City Auditor

Recommendation Status as of December 31, 2024

Closed in 2024: 28, 23%

Remaining Pending: 74, 60%

Implemented in 2024: 21, 17%
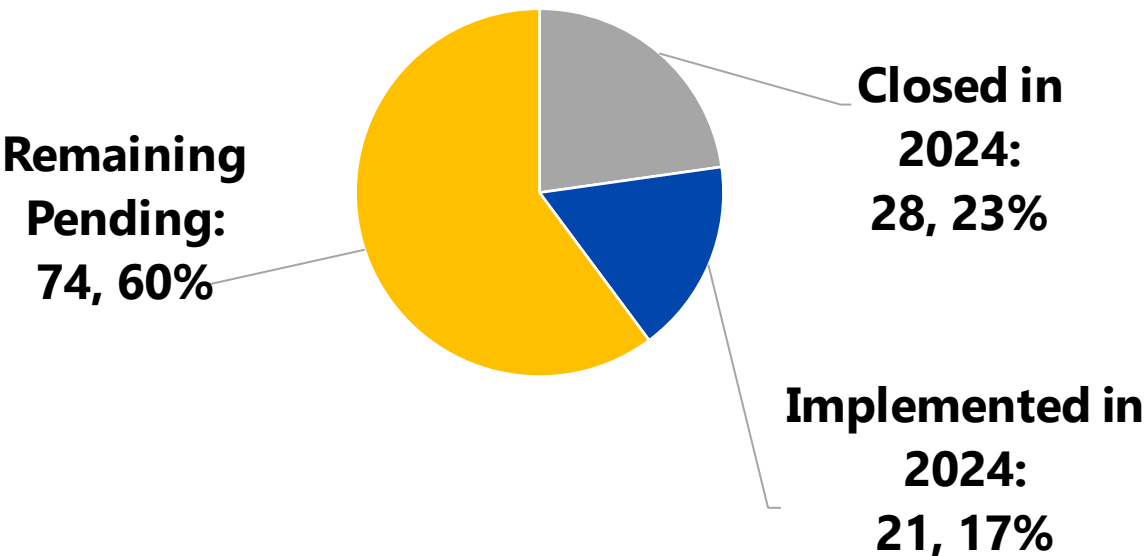
Fully Implemented in 2024

Seattle Information Technology Department Loss Reports (2020) – Fully Implemented

Seattle Municipal Court Probation Audit (2021) – Fully Implemented

Mayor's Homeless Encampments Dashboard (2022) – Fully Implemented

Construction Permitting Update (2023)

In 2024, the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) reported that all **11 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.

Exhibit 1: We examined the construction permitting process from intake through corrections

Project Research & Planning | Pre-Application | Intake | Initial Plan Review | Corrections | Permit Issuance

AUDIT SCOPE

Construction Permitting Update (2023)

OCA Recommendation #2 – Pending

The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) should address potential permitting barriers and equity concerns by incorporating the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) values into the permitting process. This should involve completing a Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) for the entire permitting process…

Progress in 2024

SDCI reported that it is in the process of conducting a Racial Equity Toolkit on the "future state of customer success (throughout the permitting process)."

Construction Permitting Update (2023)

OCA Recommendation # 7 – Pending

The City Budget Office, in collaboration with other City departments, should evaluate the governance and funding structures of departments that review construction permit applications and determine if changes can be made to better position the City to quickly respond to fluctuations in permit demand while meeting customer expectations.

Progress in 2024

The City Budget Office reported that work was ongoing to set up the Permitting and Customer Trust (PACT) Team to serve as a single point of accountability in the City for governance of the permitting process.

Evidence-Based Treatment for People Who Use Methamphetamine (2022)

OCA Recommendation #1 - Pending

Government, including the City of Seattle, should act with urgency to address methamphetamine use disorder in non-clinical settings by exploring ways to scale up implementation of evidence-based treatment (i.e., Contingency Management) with innovations that reduce barriers to participation and with ongoing rigorous research to ensure that positive outcomes are achieved.

Progress in 2024

- The Mayor's Office (MO) reported that this recommendation remains pending, and they continue to track the progress of this pilot.

- We will consider this recommendation implemented once the pilot is concluded and an implementation plan has been developed.

- Washington State University (WSU) Study of Contingency Management

Evidence-Based Treatment for People Who Use Methamphetamine (2022)

- WA state Health Care Authority is funding a Contingency Management pilot in Seattle at Plymouth Housing.

- Two Peer Navigators implement the program. 40 residents served to date; 29 have successfully graduated.

- Washington State University is evaluating pilot.

- Higher completion rates and higher participation rates than in clinical settings.

See February 2025 article on the Seattle Contingency Management Pilot from Canadian Broadcasting
https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/washington-state-free-gift-cards-to-get-off-drugs-1.7454079

Organized Retail Crime Update (2023)

4 implemented
(6 pending)

Addressing Overdoses and Crime (2024)

Exhibit 3: Audit Case Study Site – Third Avenue from Virginia Street to Blanchard Street

1 Plymouth Housing Sylvia Odom's Place

2 YWCA Opportunity Place

3 Harborview Third Avenue Center (Clinic)

4 YWCA Angeline's Day Center

5 Plymouth Housing Administration Offices

6 Plymouth Housing Langdon & Anne Simons Senior Apartments

7 Evergreen Treatment Services REACH Office

M King County Metro Stop

Source: Office of City Auditor

2 implemented (6 pending)

Seattle Police Oversight Update (2015, 2016, & 2017)

1 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.

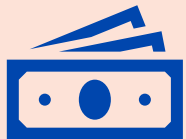**7** recommendations remain open from our April 2016 report on SPD's management of overtime that was requested by then Police Chief Kathleen O'Toole. These recommendations are still open largely due to the need for a new software solution.

**10*** recommendations remain open from our Dec. 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. *(*The 10 remaining recommendations are separated into 12 for tracking purposes.)*

Remaining 74 Recommendations by Dept/Year

Department	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Grand Total
City Budget Office (CBO)									1		1
City Council			4						1		5
Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI)							1		13		14
Finance and Administrative Services (FAS)									1		1
Human Resources (SDHR)									2		2
Office of Labor Standards (OLS)					4						4
Mayor's Office								1	9	5	15
Seattle Police Department (SPD)	1	7	7							1	16
Seattle Public Utilities (SPU)				2				6			8
Retirement					1						1
Special Events in Office of Economic Dev.			1								1
Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)						2	4				6
Grand Total	**1**	**7**	**12**	**2**	**5**	**2**	**5**	**7**	**27**	**6**	**74**

Public Dashboard - Demo

https://www.seattle.gov/cityauditor/recommendations
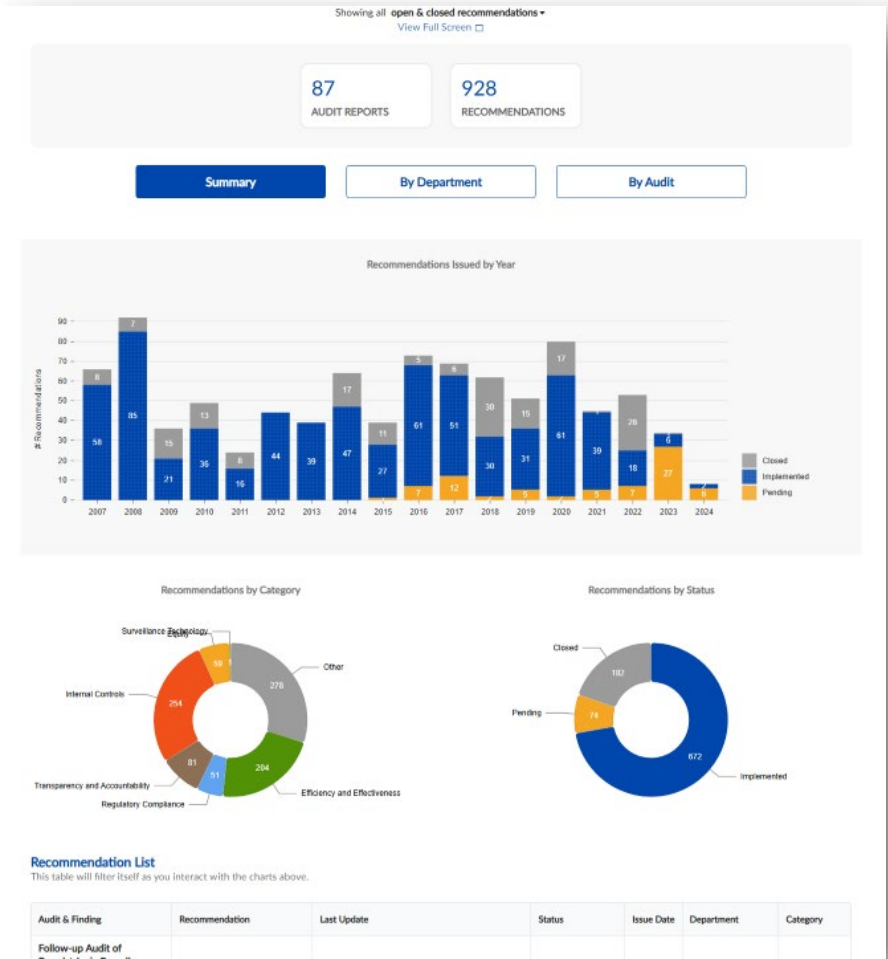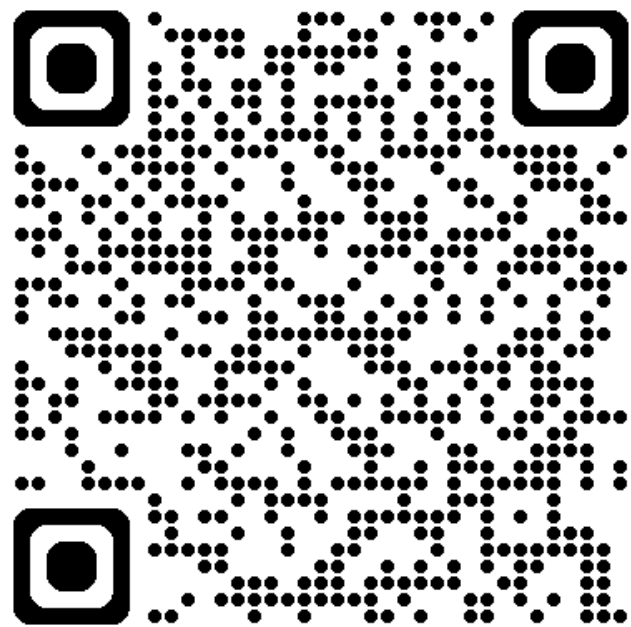
THANK YOU

Seattle Office of City Auditor

Audit Recommendation Follow-up

- **Organized Retail Crime, 2023**
- **Addressing Overdoses and Crime, 2024**
- **Addressing Gun Violence, 2025**

August 14, 2025
Seattle City Council
Governance, Accountability, and Economic Development Committee

Seattle Office of City Auditor

Organized Retail Crime (2023)

4 implemented
(6 pending)

Addressing Overdoses and Crime (2024)

Exhibit 3: Audit Case Study Site – Third Avenue from Virginia Street to Blanchard Street

1 Plymouth Housing Sylvia Odom's Place

2 YWCA Opportunity Place

3 Harborview Third Avenue Center (Clinic)

4 YWCA Angeline's Day Center

5 Plymouth Housing Administration Offices

6 Plymouth Housing Langdon & Anne Simons Senior Apartments

7 Evergreen Treatment Services REACH Office

M King County Metro Stop
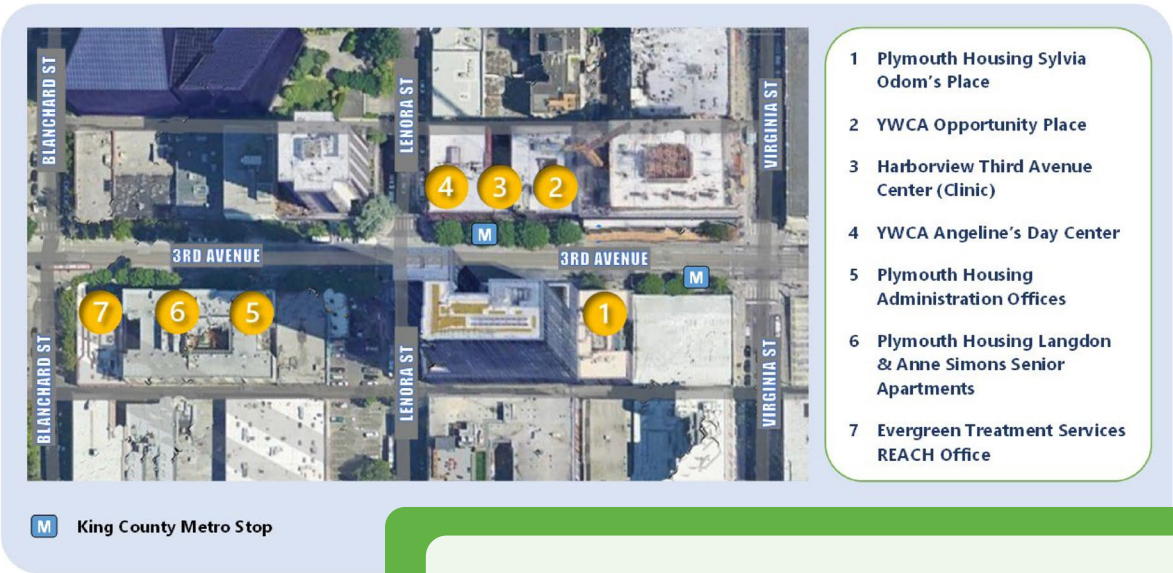
Source: Office of City Auditor

2 implemented (6 pending)

Understanding and Addressing Gun Violence (2024)

Participants in a **Violence Reduction Council** analyze data on a neighborhood map. Cities including **Milwaukee, WI, Toledo, OH, and Norfolk, VA use Violence Reduction Councils** to address violent crime in a coordinated way. Photo: Violence Reduction Councils, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Bloomberg American Health Initiative

(6 pending)

THANK YOU

Seattle Office of City Auditor

AUDIT REPORT: The City Can Do More to Tackle Organized Retail Crime in Seattle
Total Recommendations: 10
Implemented Recommendations: 4
Pending: 6

Department Assigned	#	Recommendations from Organized Retail Crime	Current Status – As of Dec. 31, 2024
Mayor	2	The City should make a coordinated and prioritized request(s) to the Washington State Attorney General and Homeland Security Investigations for assistance with organized retail crime fencing crime analysis.	**Status: Pending** **Update:** The Mayor's Office (MO) reported that this recommendation remains pending. We will consider this recommendation to be implemented when the MO develops and implements its action plan to address organized retail crime in Seattle.
Mayor	3	The City should consider using free technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice to begin to apply problem-oriented-policing techniques to address known organized retail crime fencing operations.	**Status: Pending** **Update:** The Mayor's Office (MO) reported that this recommendation remains pending. We will consider this recommendation to be implemented when the MO develops and implements its action plan to address organized retail crime in Seattle.
Mayor	4	The City should explore opportunities for other law enforcement agencies to assist with conducting and documenting booster interviews for the purpose of gathering information on organized retail crime fencing operations.	**Status: Pending** **Update:** The Mayor's Office (MO) reported that this recommendation remains pending. We will consider this recommendation to be implemented when the MO develops and implements its action plan to address organized retail crime in Seattle.

Department Assigned	#	Recommendations from Organized Retail Crime	Current Status – As of Dec. 31, 2024
Mayor	7	The City should leverage its experience with place-based crime prevention to address illegal street markets where stolen goods are fenced. This should include supporting the completion of Seattle Police Department's place-based recommendations for the 12th and Jackson intersection.	The Mayor's Office through the Pho Dep place-based initiative, is currently working through implementing the community recommended list of items and the Seattle Police Department's Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design recommendations. Additionally, the City has begun working with other enforcement agencies to work on addressing some of the anchored criminal issues they are seeing in the area. This work is ongoing. We will consider this recommendation to be implemented when the Pho Dep Little Saigon Safety Plan has been implemented. See https://flsseattle.org/what-we-do/advocacy/phodep/
Mayor	8	To help address organized retail crime, the City should explore ways to reduce barriers for small businesses to participate in crime prevention trainings.	**Status: Pending** **Update:** The Mayor's Office (MO) reported that this recommendation remains pending. We will consider this recommendation to be implemented when the MO develops and implements its action plan to address organized retail crime in Seattle.
Mayor	10	The City should advocate for new state and federal legislation that could help address organized retail crime investigations and should seek opportunities for funding, technical assistance, or collaboration resulting from the legislation.	**Status: Pending** **Update:** The Mayor's Office (MO) reported that this recommendation remains pending. We will consider this recommendation to be implemented when the MO develops and implements its action plan to address organized retail crime in Seattle.

AUDIT REPORT: [Addressing Places in Seattle Where Overdoses and Crime are Concentrated: An Evidence-Based Approach](#)
Total Recommendations: 8
Implemented Recommendations: 2
Pending: 6

Department Assigned	#	Recommendations from Overdoses and Crime	Current Status – As of Dec. 31, 2024
Mayor	1	The Mayor's Office should lead the City in addressing places where overdoses and crime are concentrated using a proven problem-solving methodology (e.g., the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Strategic Prevention Framework). This should include continuing the problem-solving work on Third Avenue from Virginia to Blanchard.	**Status: Pending** **Update:** The Mayor's Office (MO) reported that the City established the Downtown Activation Team (DAT) as a coordinated multi-department place-based problem-solving methodology to address areas with high levels of crime and overdoses. DAT involves public safety, cleaning, and neighborhood activation functions. It further includes close collaboration with service providers, including case workers, substance abuse treatment providers, and milieu management. We will consider this recommendation implemented when the Mayor's Office provides and our office has reviewed a report by Innovation and Performance that evaluates the work of the DAT and the Seattle Restoration Framework to address the places in Seattle where overdoses and crimes are concentrated.

Department Assigned	#	Recommendations from Overdoses and Crime	Current Status – As of Dec. 31, 2024
Mayor	2	The Mayor's Office should lead the City in seeking federal technical assistance and funding to address places where overdoses and crime are concentrated.	**Status: Pending** **Update:** The Mayor's Office (MO) reported that the Seattle Police Department (SPD) is not in a position, staffing-wise or jurisdictionally, to establish such a task force. SPD does, however, coordinate with the Drug Enforcement Agency's Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Taskforce, which coordinates with more than 75 federal, state, local, and tribal agencies regionally, to tackle the pipelines that feed drug distribution in the Seattle area. Additionally, SPD is a ready partner to the work organized of King County Public Health and the King County Medical Examiner's Office, which manage an interdisciplinary team to investigate local fatal overdose trends and prevention strategies. We will consider this recommendation implemented when the Mayor's Office provides, and our office has reviewed a report by Innovation and Performance that evaluates the work of the Downtown Activation Team and the Seattle Restoration Framework to address the places in Seattle where overdoses and crimes are concentrated.

Department Assigned	#	Recommendations from Overdoses and Crime	Current Status – As of Dec. 31, 2024
Mayor	4	The Mayor's Office, in collaboration with the Office of Emergency Management, Seattle Fire Department, Seattle Police Department, and other stakeholders, should establish a coordination system such as the Multi-Agency Coordination Group. The group should have well-defined objectives, goals, and reporting mechanisms.	**Status: Pending** **Update:** The Mayor's Office (MO) reported that this recommendation remains pending. We will consider this recommendation implemented when the MO provides, and our office has reviewed a report by Innovation and Performance that evaluates the work of the Downtown Activation Team and the Seattle Restoration Framework to address the places in Seattle where overdoses and crimes are concentrated.
Mayor	5	The Mayor's Office should formalize an ongoing City relationship with Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area's Overdose Response Strategy group to continue to leverage its technical assistance resources and coordination with other government agencies.	**Status: Pending** **Update:** The Mayor's Office (MO) reported that this recommendation remains pending and indicated that the Seattle Police Department (SPD) does, however, coordinate with the Drug Enforcement Agency's Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Taskforce. We will consider this recommendation to be implemented when the MO formalizes the relationship with the Northwest HIDTA Response Strategy group to continue to leverage its technical assistance resources and coordination with other government agencies.

Department Assigned	#	Recommendations from Overdoses and Crime	Current Status – As of Dec. 31, 2024
Police	7	The Seattle Police Department, in consultation with the Mayor's Office and federal partners, should explore the establishment of a joint law enforcement task force for fatal overdoses.	**Status: Pending** **Update:** The Mayor's Office (MO) reported that this recommendation remains pending and indicated that the Seattle Police Department (SPD) does, however, coordinate with the Drug Enforcement Agency's Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Taskforce. We will consider this recommendation to be implemented when the MO and SPD consider and make a determination on establishing and implementing a joint law enforcement task force to investigate fatal overdoses.
Mayor	8	The Mayor's Office should ensure that the City regularly evaluates its efforts to address places where overdoses and crime are concentrated as required by proven problem-solving methodologies (e.g., the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Strategic Prevention Framework).	**Status: Pending** **Update:** The Mayor's Office (MO) reported that this recommendation remains pending with work being performed by the Downtown Activation Team (DAT) using the metrics established by Innovation and Performance as part of the Seattle Restoration Framework. We will consider this recommendation implemented when the MO provides, and our office has reviewed a report by Innovation and Performance that evaluates the work of the DAT and the Seattle Restoration Framework to address the places in Seattle where overdoses and crimes are concentrated.

AUDIT REPORT: Four Recommendations to Better Understand and Address Current Gun Violence Patterns in Seattle
Total Recommendations: 4
Implemented Recommendations: 4
Pending: 4

Department Assigned	#	Recommendations from Gun Violence Audit	Current Status – As of March 25, 2025
Mayor	1	The City of Seattle should develop systematic reporting on gun violence patterns to City departments, other government agencies, elected officials, and the public/community stakeholders. The U.S. Department of Justice (through the Office of Justice Programs and the Police Executive Research Forum) is willing, as federal funding permits, to continue to provide technical assistance to Seattle to address this recommendation.	**Status: Pending** **Update:** Report issued March 25, 2025
Mayor	2	The Mayor's Office should provide an update to the Seattle City Council on the Community Assisted Response and Engagement (CARE) Department's ordinance-mandated new initiative to integrate the City's violent intervention programs. This should include the feasibility of CARE to convene City departments and partners involved with violence prevention and response and to help disseminate systematic reporting on gun violence patterns.	**Status: Pending** **Update:** Report issued March 25, 2025

Department Assigned	#	Recommendations from Gun Violence Audit	Current Status – As of March 25, 2025
Mayor	3	The City of Seattle should improve its capacity for problem analysis to address gun violence, including 1.) implementing problem-oriented policing, 2.) exploring the use of problem analyses such as homicide reviews and place network investigations, and 3.) requiring organizations that receive City funding to address gun violence to complete evidence-based problem-solving training.	**Status: Pending** **Update:** Report issued March 25, 2025
Mayor	4	To address gun violence the City of Seattle should implement a framework for regular systematic coordination among City departments, other government entities, and community organizations.	**Status: Pending** **Update:** Report issued March 25, 2025

File #: CB 121060, **Version:** 1

CITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE _____

COUNCIL BILL _____

AN ORDINANCE relating to the West Seattle Junction Parking and Business Improvement Area; modifying the exemptions to the Levy of Special Assessment; and amending Ordinance 113326, as previously amended by Ordinances 115997, 119539, 120570, 121758, 125152, and 127103.

WHEREAS, in 1987, through Ordinance 113326, the City established the West Seattle Junction Parking and

Business Improvement Area (PBIA), providing for the levy of special assessments upon businesses

within the PBIA for the purpose of enhancing conditions for operation of those businesses; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, through Ordinance 115997, the City amended the exemptions to the Levy of Special

Assessment; and

WHEREAS, in 1999, through Ordinance 119539, the City increased the original assessment rates for the PBIA;

and

WHEREAS, in 2001, through Ordinance 120570, the City clarified the legislation to more accurately describe

and implement the intent of the petitioners who requested that the City create the PBIA; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, the City passed Ordinance 121758, increasing the established assessment rates for the

PBIA; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, the City passed Ordinance 125152, increasing the established assessment rates for the

PBIA, and there has been no subsequent increase in the assessment rates; and

WHEREAS, in 2024, the City passed Ordinance 127103, modifying the boundaries for the PBIA; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 3 of Ordinance 113326 as amended by Ordinance 115997, businesses that

qualify for an exemption from the from the City of Seattle Business License Tax (also known as the

Business and Occupation Tax) are likewise exempt from paying any assessment to the PBIA; and

WHEREAS, Council Bill 121028, which includes a proposed ballot measure before the voters to increase the City's Business and Occupation Tax threshold exemption from $100,000 in gross revenue to $2 million in gross revenue, would have the unintended effect of exempting an unsustainably large portion of businesses in the PBIA from assessment, thereby significantly reducing the PBIA's ability to provide services; and

WHEREAS, the City finds that businesses that qualify for the Business and Occupation Tax threshold exemption benefit from PBIA services to the same proportional degree as businesses that happen to earn more in gross revenue; and

WHEREAS, on _____ 2025, the City Council held a public hearing regarding its intention to modify the exemptions to the West Seattle PBIA's assessment rates; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Section 3 of Ordinance 113326, last amended by Ordinance 115997, is amended as follows:

Section 3. Exemptions: No special assessments shall be levied upon and collected from:

(1) Organizations, qualified for charitable contribution under the United States Internal Revenue Code (26 USC 170 (c));

(2) Sponsors of public events and concessionaires, and vendors or entertainers, who engage in business activities in the area for less than 30 days in aggregate per year((;)) ;

(3) Governmental agencies unless otherwise specified; ((and))

(4) Newsstands in street right-of-way((.)) ;

(5) Fraternal organizations; social service agencies; and education facilities; and

(((6) Businesses that qualify for exemption from City of Seattle Business and Occupation tax; and

(7))) (6) New businesses for the first year of operation. During the second year of

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operation, these businesses shall be assessed 50% of their assessment rate and 100% during their third

year of operation. <u>This exemption does not apply to any assessment due for the parking assessment in</u>

<u>Zone C levied under subsection 2.1(f).</u>

Section 2. This ordinance shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Sections 1.04.020 and

1.04.070.

Passed by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2025, and signed by

me in open session in authentication of its passage this _____ day of _____, 2025.

_____

President _____ of the City Council

Approved /   returned unsigned /   vetoed this _____ day of _____, 2025.

_____

Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2025.

_____

Scheereen Dedman, City Clerk

(Seal)

Attachments:

<u>**SUMMARY and FISCAL NOTE**</u>

Department:	Dept. Contact:	CBO Contact:
Office of Economic Development	Theresa Barreras	Nick Tucker

1. BILL SUMMARY

Legislation Title: AN ORDINANCE relating to the West Seattle Junction Business Improvement Area; modifying the exemptions to the Levy of Special Assessment; and amending Ordinance 113326, as previously amended by Ordinances 115997, 119539, 120570, 121758, 125152, and 127103.

Summary and Background of the Legislation: The West Seattle Junction Business Improvement Area (PBIA) is assessed on businesses based on revenues reported on their City of Seattle Business and Occupation (B&O) tax. Currently, businesses that generate $100,000 or less in annual revenues are exempt from B&O taxes and the PBIA also exempts them from assessment. If the proposed change to increase the B&O exemption threshold from $100,000 to $2 million in Council Bill 121028 passes, it would have the unintended consequence of exempting a large portion of businesses in the PBIA from assessment, thereby significantly reducing the PBIA's revenues. In addition, the WSJBIA has demonstrated that businesses earning less than the B&O Tax threshold still benefit from its services and should contribute equitably. The PBIA is therefore requesting an amendment to its ordinance to remove this exemption. This change would currently affect 23 businesses that are receiving the B&O and PBIA exemption and result in annual assessments ranging from $80-$300 for each, with a combined total annual increase of $4,600 to the PBIA.

2. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Does this legislation create, fund, or amend a CIP Project?   ☐ Yes ☒ No

3. SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Does this legislation have financial impacts to the City?   ☐ Yes ☒ No

3.d. Other Impacts

Does the legislation have other financial impacts to The City of Seattle, including direct or indirect, one-time or ongoing costs, that are not included in Sections 3.a through 3.c? If so, please describe these financial impacts.
No.

Template last revised: December 9, 2024

If the legislation has costs, but they can be absorbed within existing operations, please describe how those costs can be absorbed. The description should clearly describe if the absorbed costs are achievable because the department had excess resources within their existing budget or if by absorbing these costs the department is deprioritizing other work that would have used these resources.
None.

Please describe any financial costs or other impacts of *not* implementing the legislation.
None.

Please describe how this legislation may affect any City departments other than the originating department.
OED works closely with the City Finance Department, which administers the assessments for the BIAs. This change will add a small number of accounts to the PBIA project that City Finance will need to bill and manage. This is a minor change that can be absorbed within existing staffing and budgets.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

a. **Is a public hearing required for this legislation?**
   Yes

b. **Is publication of notice with The Daily Journal of Commerce and/or The Seattle Times required for this legislation?**
   Yes

c. **Does this legislation affect a piece of property?**
   No

d. **Please describe any perceived implication for the principles of the Race and Social Justice Initiative.**

   The BIA benefits property owners, business owners, employees, visitors, and residents with cleaning services, events, and support for new and existing businesses. However, there is potential for the BIA to lead to higher residential and commercial rents since business owners' costs will be slightly increasing to pay for the new services. People of color (POC) could be disproportionately impacted if these changes to costs occur, but there is no data to determine likely impacts.

   i. **Please attach any Racial Equity Toolkits or other racial equity analyses in the development and/or assessment of the legislation.**

   We did not conduct a Racial Equity Toolkit as part of this legislation.

   ii. **What is the Language Access Plan for any communications to the public?**

All notifications to property owners will include an option for translation/interpretation if needed.

e. **Climate Change Implications**

    i. **Emissions: How is this legislation likely to increase or decrease carbon emissions in a material way? Please attach any studies or other materials that were used to inform this response.**

       This legislation is not likely to impact carbon emissions in a material way.

    ii. **Resiliency: Will the action(s) proposed by this legislation increase or decrease Seattle's resiliency (or ability to adapt) to climate change in a material way? If so, explain. If it is likely to decrease resiliency in a material way, describe what will or could be done to mitigate the effects.**

       This legislation is not likely to impact Seattle's resiliency in a material way.

f. **If this legislation includes a new initiative or a major programmatic expansion: What are the specific long-term and measurable goal(s) of the program? How will this legislation help achieve the program's desired goal(s)? What mechanisms will be used to measure progress towards meeting those goals?**

The West Seattle Junction BIA is an existing program.

g. **Does this legislation create a non-utility CIP project that involves a shared financial commitment with a non-City partner agency or organization?**
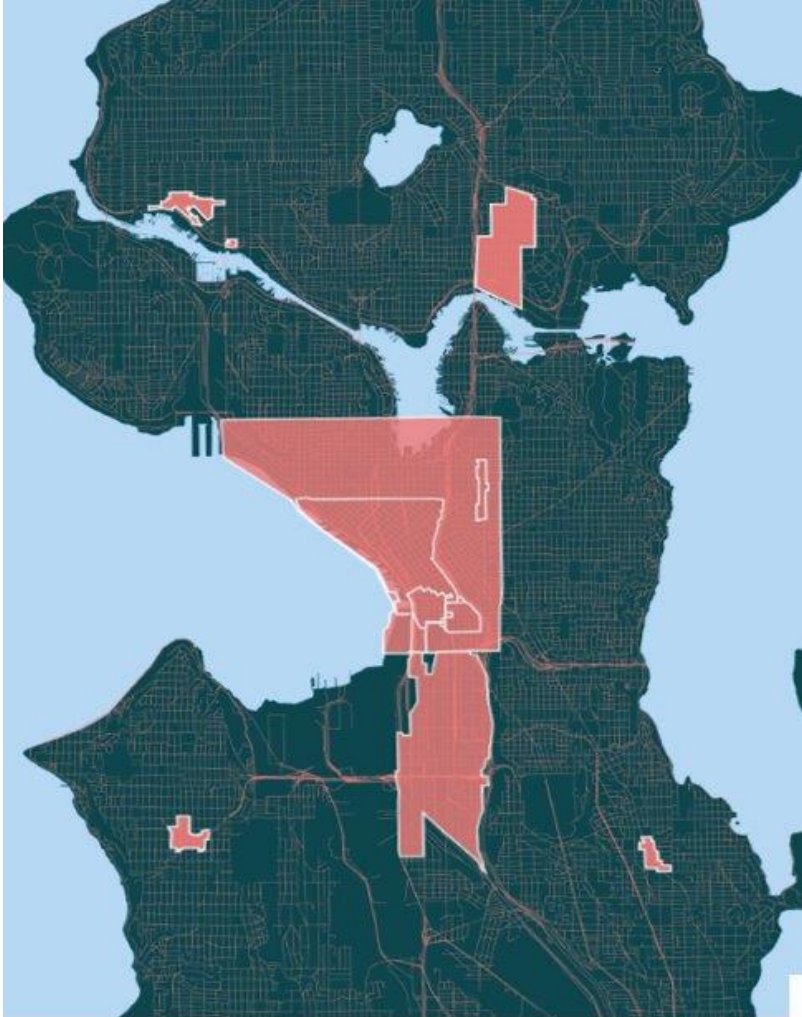No

5. ATTACHMENTS

Summary Attachments: None.

West Seattle Junction Association BIA Amendment

August 14, 2025

Casey Rogers, BIA Policy Advisor, Office of Economic Development

SEATTLE'S BIA PROGRAM

- 11 BIAs in Seattle generate more than $45 million for enhanced business services and programs

- Local control, predictable and sustainable funding

- Revenue collected is 100% allocated to the district

- Program is supported by OED and Treasury Services

Slide 2

WEST SEATTLE JUNCTION ASSOCIATION PROPOSED AMENDMENT

- The West Seattle Junction Association BIA proposes **modifying their ratepayer exemptions**

- Proposal **removes an assessment exemption for businesses that qualify for B & O exemption** (current exemption threshold is $100k annual revenue)

- **Makes the assessment more equitable**; businesses below the threshold still receive BIA services

- **Also protects the BIA from current proposed policy to change** B&O exemption threshold from $100,000 to $2 million

- This change would **affect 23 businesses** that currently receive this exemption. Their annual assessments would range from $80-$300 for each, with a combined total annual increase of $4,600 to the BIA

Slide 3

WEST SEATTLE JUNCTION ASSOCIATION PROPOSED AMENDMENT

- OED has reviewed the proposal, which **meets the requirements** of a BIA amendment and is allowed under RCW 35.87A.075.

- **No petition process is required** as part of the amendment process, though the BIA has already conducted outreach to all new potential ratepayers.

- City will notify ratepayers about the proposal in advance of the **Public Hearing scheduled for September 11**.

Slide 4

QUESTIONS?

Casey Rogers

Office of Economic Development

BIA Policy Advisor

casey.rogers@seattle.gov

206-665-1002
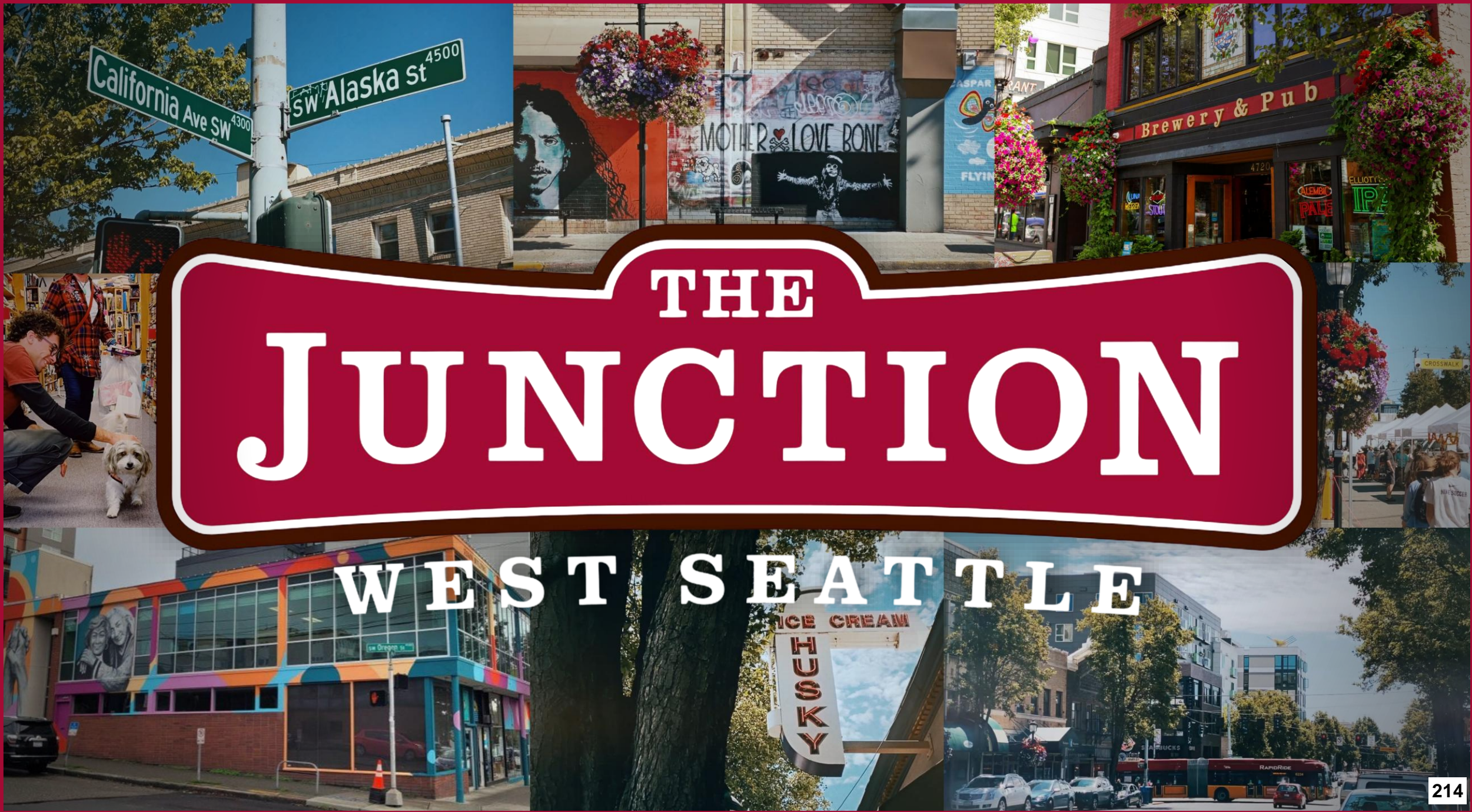
THE JUNCTION
WEST SEATTLE

What is the WSJA?

The West Seattle Junction Association is a Business Improvement District. It is an organization made up of local merchants and other businesses with an Executive Director, a Board of Directors and committees to organize marketing, beautification, events, safety, cleaning and community service projects. It was founded in 1987 under an ordinance from the City of Seattle.

West Seattle Junction BIA

Legend

WSJ Boundary V2

Use
- 4-Plex
- Apartment
- Apartment(Mixed Use)
- Apartment(Subsidized)
- Art Gallery/Museum/Soc Srvc
- Bank
- Church/Welfare/Relig Srvc
- Club
- Condominium(Mixed Use)
- Condominium(Office)
- Condominium(Residential)
- Conv Store with Gas
- Conv Store without Gas
- Duplex
- Grocery Store
- Medical/Dental Office
- Mini Lube
- Office Building
- Park, Public(Zoo/Arbor)
- Parking(Assoc)
- Parking(Commercial Lot)
- Post Office/Post Service
- Restaurant(Fast Food)
- Restaurant/Lounge
- Retail Store
- Service Station
- Single Family(C/I Use)
- Single Family(C/I Zone)
- Tavern/Lounge
- Townhouse Plat
- Utility, Public
- Vacant(Commercial)
- Vet/Animal Control Srvc

UNCOMMON BRIDGES

North

Our BIA was founded in 1987 with assessments based on businesses' self-declared revenue.

In the WSJA ordinance #115997 under Section 3 Exemptions, it states that:

'no special assessments shall be levied upon and collected from businesses that qualify for exemption from the City of Seattle Business and Occupation tax.'

Currently we do not assess any businesses making under $100K because they are exempt from B&O.

We are seeking to remove the clause from our ordinance linking us to B&O Exemptions.

Why are we doing this? Two reasons:

1-Considering the proposed legislation, businesses under 2 million will be exempt from paying B&O, and therefore also exempt from the special assessments that sustain our BIA. Almost all our businesses are small. This would mean the end of our BIA.

2-Because we believe in fairness. Right now, businesses under $100K in gross revenue benefit from the BIA's services including security, daily cleaning, graffiti and biohazard removal, marketing, parking,beautification, and more—without contributing financially. This amendment would create a more equitable structure where all businesses contribute, even if it's just a small amount.

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The list of businesses who declared '0' on their assessment form and would be impacted and the communication made thus far.

Site Name	Rate	Est. Rev.	Est. Assessm	communication	in favor?
ROBERT CAPOVILLA, MA	0.001513	100,000.00	$ 151.30	Called	
ADAM C HALL, MA	0.001513	100,000.00	$ 151.30	called	
DIANNE MACK	0.001513	100,000.00	$ 151.30	emailed	
ANTIQUE MALL OF WS	0.003025	100,000.00	$ 302.50	called, emailed 2x	
JENNIE L SNELL PHD	0.000811	100,000.00	$ 81.10	emailed, 2 x	
ROSE NAILS	0.003025	100,000.00	$ 302.50	emailed 2 x	
PRIMP	0.001513	100,000.00	$ 151.30	emailed	
SEASONS SALON & SPA	0.003025	100,000.00	$ 302.50	emailed	
FLEURT	0.001513	100,000.00	$ 151.30	emailed 2 x & in person	yes
KIZUKI RAMEN AND IZAKAYA	0.003025	100,000.00	$ 302.50	emailed 2 x	
SKINCARE BY CASEY	0.003025	100,000.00	$ 302.50	emailed	yes
INDUSTRIOUS WEST SEATTLE	0.001513	100,000.00	$ 151.30	emailed and called	yes
DENNIS DYE INS AGENCY IN	0.003025	100,000.00	$ 302.50	emailed 2 x	
SNIP IT'S HAIR CUTS FOR KIDS	0.003025	100,000.00	$ 302.50	emailed & in person	yes
THE SALON	0.001513	100,000.00	$ 151.30	emailed x 2	
LARS GESING	0.001513	100,000.00	$ 151.30	emailed and called	yes
TRIVAS FAMILY MEDICINE	0.000811	100,000.00	$ 81.10	emailed	
BY AND BY SKATE SHOP	0.003025	100,000.00	$ 302.50	emailed & in person	yes
CLASSICS BY KENZIE	0.001513	100,000.00	$ 151.30	emailed	
THE BROCANTE BEACH HOUSE	0.003025	100,000.00	$ 302.50	emailed & called	yes
JUNCTION HOT YOGA	0.001513	100,000.00	$ 151.30	emailed and called	yes
JUST POKE WEST SEATTLE	0.001513	100,000.00	$ 151.30	emailed 2 x	
Total extra revenue expected			$ 4,549.00		

Communication narrative
WSJA to businesses under the 100K threshold:

- Emailed the included letter to all. Only one business replied, which was the owner of Skin Care by Casy, who said she would support this because she felt everyone should pitch in.
- Walked into three businesses and talked with the owners (Snip Its, Industrious and By and By Skate Shop). Every owner I spoke with in person felt it was a good idea to remove the clause and agreed it's only fair to chip in to help pay for the services the BIA provides.
- Called and talked to Lars Gesing Gallery, Junction Hot Yoga, Fleurt and Brocante, which all said they supported the amendment as well. The owner of Brocante said "Anything we can do to support you! YES, 150% we will pay in." We love being a part of this community.
- In total, 8 of the 22 affected business owners have responded positively thus far.
- None have said they don't support this amendment change.

The added revenue of $4500 annually, will support our clean and safe programming.

Letter to businesses

Subject: A More Equitable BIA for West Seattle – We Need Your Voice

Dear Junction Merchant,

As the Executive Director of the West Seattle Junction Business Improvement Area (WSBIA), I'm reaching out to share an important amendment we're proposing to our founding ordinance (115997). We are seeking to remove the current $100,000 minimum gross revenue threshold that exempts some businesses from paying BIA assessments.

Why are we doing this? Because we believe in fairness. Right now, businesses under $100K in gross revenue benefit from the BIA's services—security, daily cleaning, graffiti and biohazard removal, marketing, beautification, and more—without contributing financially. This amendment would create a more equitable structure where all businesses contribute, even if it's just a small amount.

Since you fall under the $100K revenue mark, your quarterly payment would range between **$20 to $75**, based on your self-reported B&O revenue. That's less than the price of a few lattes per month—yet it goes a long way in helping keep our Junction clean, safe, and thriving.

Consider this:

Our cleaning crews remove **an average of 25 graffiti tags and over 40 instances of dog and human waste per visit**.

We produce over **40 community-focused events annually** that generate their own funding and bring tens of thousands of people to celebrate together.

We provide **private security**, beautification projects, holiday activations, and robust marketing—all designed to support the vitality of our small business community.

We regularly hear from merchants who feel it's only fair that everyone pays their share for the services they benefit from. This amendment reflects that spirit of shared investment in the health and success of our neighborhood.

This change would go into effect in **Q4 of 2025**, and I want to make sure your voice is heard. Please let me know your thoughts on this proposal by **Monday, July 21st**. I'm also happy to stop by your place of business or hop on a call to answer any questions you may have next week.

Together, we've built something special here in the Junction—and together, we can make sure it remains strong, vibrant, and equitable for all.

With appreciation,
Chris Mackay
Executive Director
West Seattle Junction Association

Benefits Of Being In The Junction BID

Provides a strong and vibrant business and community atmosphere.

- **Increased retail sales** and **patronage of services** in The Junction Business District

- **Enhanced business image** and **consumer awareness** of The Junction Business District

- Provides a vehicle with which to undertake **neighborhood beautification** projects and plan **special events**

- **Clean and safe streets** — we hire and oversee a cleaning crew and a private security team

- Enables this district to provide **low-cost parking** for its customers

- Our marketing creates **awareness** of the products and services available in The Junction

- Provides a **forum to express views and concerns** which can be addressed by the association as a team. Community issues can then be expressed with the weight of the association behind them; outcomes can be influenced at a city-wide level.

Pillars

Clean & Safe

- Enhance safety and welcoming vibes in the Junction
- Clean team on-site 4x weekly
- Private foot and drive security patrols 7 days a week

Beautification

- Build a charming, inviting atmosphere to work and shop
- Banners, perimeter & tree lighting, and flower baskets

Events

- Create unique, celebratory programs that build community
- Host events that boost economic vibrancy

Marketing

- Strengthen marketing and promotion for Junction events and businesses
- Utilize social media, eNewsletters, digital ads and press channels

Advocacy

- Support and connect with the City of Seattle as needed
- Focus on safety, Light Rail advocacy and resource access

Junction Access

- Manage four affordable parking lots in the Junction

West Seattle Junction Association Staff - 2 people run the show!

Chris Mackay

Executive Director

chris@wsjunction.org

206-502-8824

Stacie Woods

Director of Marketing & Events

stacie@wsjunction.org

206-758-8213

Thank you

Together, we're building a lively community hub that's full of opportunity.