



Downtown
Seattle
Association

Metropolitan
Improvement
District



Westlake Park & Occidental Square **Activation Report**

July 1-Dec. 31, 2021

A public/nonprofit partnership between Seattle Parks and Recreation, the Downtown Seattle Association and Metropolitan Improvement District to enhance Westlake Park and Occidental Square through staffing, activation and regular programming.



Key Findings

Reinvesting in Our Parks

Every dollar raised in Westlake Park and Occidental Square is reinvested in park activation.

Leveraging Dollars

Every dollar of Seattle Parks and Recreation funding generated an additional \$16.57 – providing a smart, efficient leveraging of SPR dollars to enhance and activate Westlake and Occidental parks.

COVID-19

Due to COVID-19, the amount of programming was limited at the beginning of the year but increased significantly starting summer 2021.

Positive Signs

As downtown began to recover from the pandemic, both Westlake Park and Occidental Square saw significant increases in park visits in summer and fall 2021 compared to the previous year.

Challenges

Initial park user surveys following the pandemic indicate that both parks experienced significant declines in perceptions that the parks were clean, safe and welcoming public spaces. Improving these perceptions will be key to returning park visits to pre-pandemic levels.

Overview

In 2016, DSA entered into a five-year agreement with the City of Seattle to manage and program Westlake Park and Occidental Square. Building on its success, this agreement has been extended an additional two years through 2022. This innovative public/nonprofit collaboration with Seattle Parks and Recreation established a new model for activating and managing urban public spaces in Seattle.

In addition to city funding, this agreement required DSA and the Metropolitan Improvement District, along with partners (Alliance for Pioneer Square, Friends of Waterfront Seattle and Seattle Parks Foundation) to contribute significant financial and organizational resources toward this effort. Every dollar raised in Westlake and Occidental parks is reinvested in park activation.

This public/nonprofit park-activation model enhances Westlake Park and Occidental Square by ensuring dedicated staffing, regular daily programming and investment in new, colorful park amenities to accomplish several key goals:

- Increase the overall number of park visitors, including children;
- Improve the gender balance of visitors using these public spaces;
- Enhance the overall attractiveness of the parks;
- Establish a sustainable financial model to support park-activation efforts; and
- Explore the benefits that a community approach to park activation and management can offer.

As the first urban center in the U.S. to feel the impacts of COVID-19, Seattle's Westlake Park and Occidental Square had to curtail activations significantly throughout the pandemic. As downtown continues to recover, we are increasing safe, socially distanced activations, and are seeing improved results as people return to public spaces although significant challenges remain to improving park perceptions and returning to pre-pandemic levels of park visitors.

Estimated Park Visits

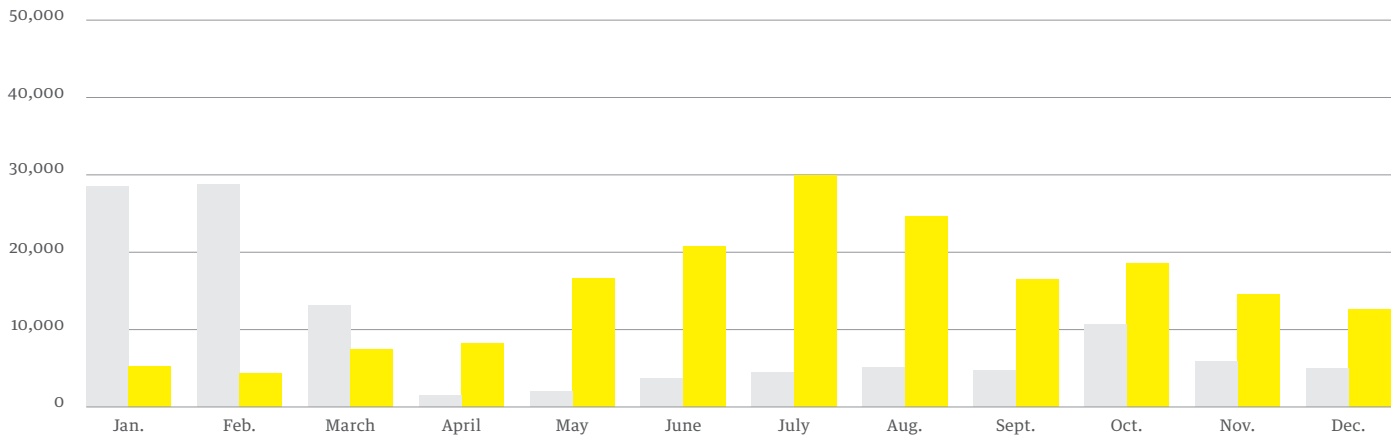
July 1-Dec.31, 2021

A key part of DSA’s park-activation strategy is daily staffing with park ambassadors. Throughout the pandemic, the ambassadors have been critical to ensuring the parks have remained clean, safe and welcoming public spaces. While some programming and activations had to be reimagined due to public health restrictions, ambassadors continued to find creative ways to make the parks engaging and inviting places. Some of events were a return of outdoor concerts, a roller skating rink, painting workshops and happy hour events in the parks.

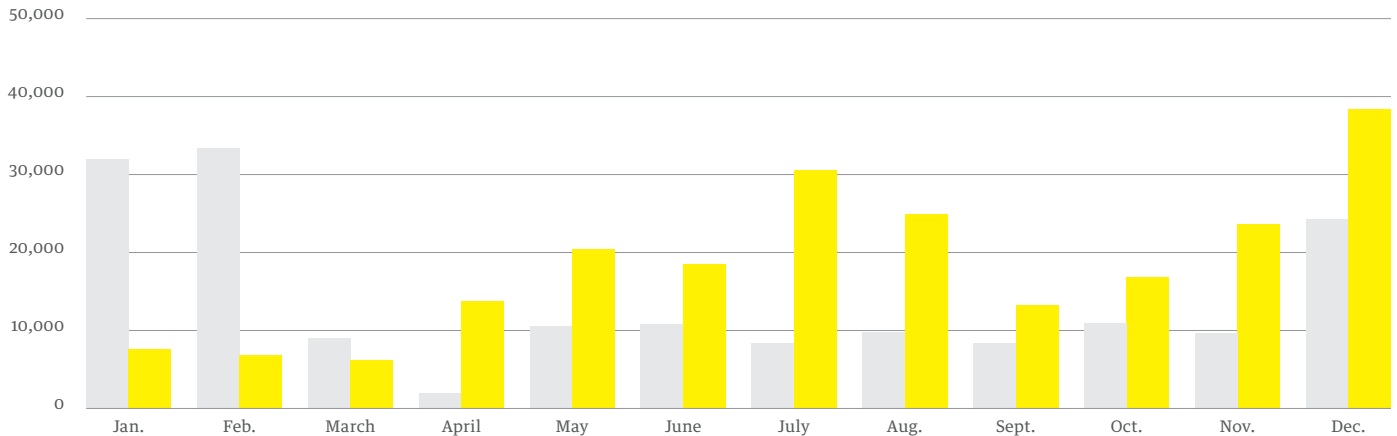
Key Findings

- Prior to the rise in the COVID delta variant, both parks saw a return of park visitors during summer 2021.
- Between July and September 2021, both Westlake Park and Occidental Square, saw around 70,000 visits – a 159% increase for Westlake and 375% increase for Occidental from the same period in 2020.
- Located at the center of downtown Seattle’s retail district, Westlake Park saw a large increase in visits during the holiday season, which grew by more than 80% compared to 2020.

OCCIDENTAL



WESTLAKE





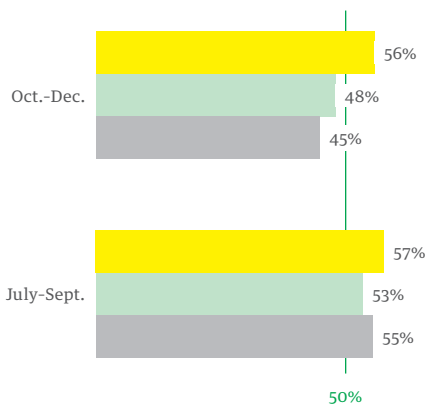
Gender Balance / July-December 2021

The gender balance of park visitors is tracked daily. This is considered a key gauge of the health of public spaces, as an increasing percentage of women and children using the park improves perceptions of safety.

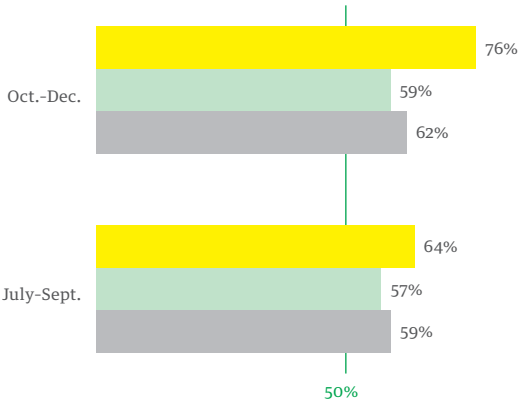
Key Findings

- Both parks saw an increasing gender imbalance between July and December 2021 compared to previous years.
- We anticipate a significant improvement in the gender balance as pandemic health outcomes continue to improve and an increasing number of workers and visitors return downtown.

WESTLAKE



OCCIDENTAL



2021
2019
2018

The graphs show the percentage of men at the parks. The ideal is 50%.

These observations were made four times daily during park operating hours.

Changing Park Perceptions / 2018-2021 Summer Surveys

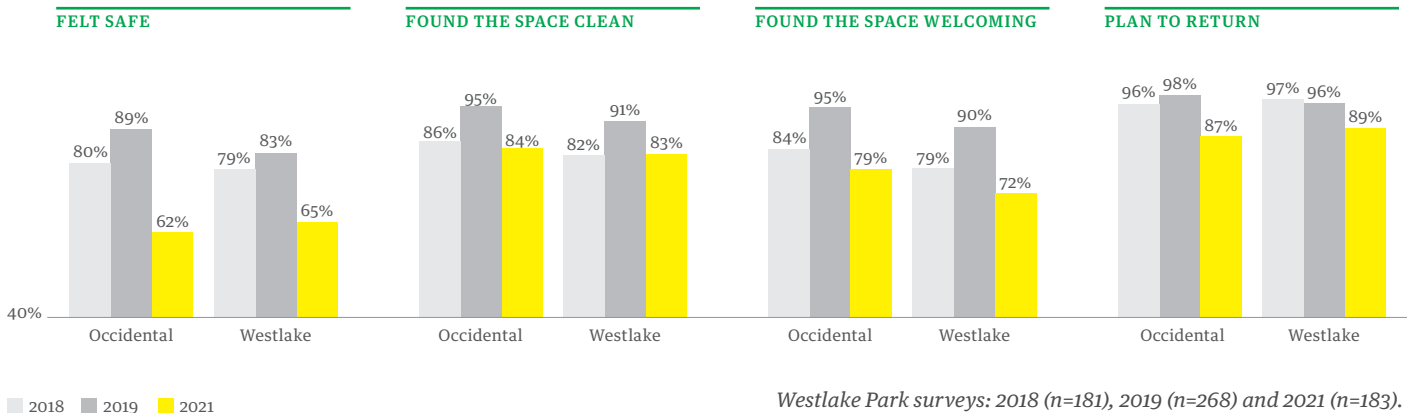
Since 2017, surveys were conducted in both Westlake Park and Occidental Square in December/January. However, due to the pandemic, surveys were not conducted in 2020 and early 2021. As outcomes have improved, park surveys returned to the parks and will be key to measuring park visitors' perceptions of the spaces as clean, safe and welcoming as we emerge from the pandemic.

DSA sought a broad survey sample population. Paper surveys were handed out in each park. Surveys were also emailed to various marketing lists (i.e., parks newsletters and event and program participants).



Key Findings

- Occidental Square and Westlake Park both saw significant declines in visitor perceptions of safety, falling 27 and 18 points respectively compared to 2019.
- Occidental and Westlake also saw declines in perceptions of cleanliness and the parks being welcoming spaces.
- Increasing levels of safety and security in Westlake Park and Occidental Square is critical for the health of both parks. Keeping park staff and visitors safe is a top priority for the post-pandemic recovery.



Westlake Park surveys: 2018 (n=181), 2019 (n=268) and 2021 (n=183).
Occidental Square surveys: 2018 (n=119), 2019 (n=198) and 2021 (n=73).



Park Activation Revenue & Expenses / July 1-Dec. 31, 2021

REVENUE

Seattle Parks and Recreation Funding	\$50,000
Partner Funding*	\$40,835
MID Funding	\$706,541
Other Income (e.g., permit fees, in-kind donations)	\$30,886
Total Revenue	\$828,262

*Alliance for Pioneer Square, Friends of Waterfront Seattle and Seattle Parks Foundation

EXPENSES

Park Staffing & Security	\$547,091
Activations (e.g., buskers, arts & crafts)	\$223,418
Equipment (e.g., lighting, planters)	\$17,832
Fixed Assets (e.g., furniture, bookcases)	\$3,390
Other Expenses (e.g., marketing, uniforms)	\$36,531
Total Expenses	\$828,262

Net Income \$0

PERMIT FEE EVENTS

Pokémon	July 17, 2021	\$525
Pokémon Go	July 17, 2021	\$525
Seattle Concert	Oct. 10, 2021	\$245
World Animal Protection	Nov. 5-6, 2021	\$1,850

Total Event Permit Fees \$3,145



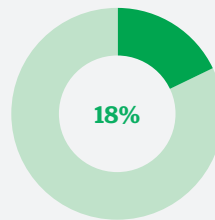
Women- and Minority-owned Business Outreach

As part of the original five-year parks agreement, DSA established an aspirational goal of directing 18% of the contract's total dollars toward WMBE firms. We remain committed to this goal. DSA has undertaken several steps that will help the organization reach long-term WMBE goals, such as establishing an RFP process for projects of more than \$5,000, and encouraging current WMBE vendors to register and participate in the city's WMBE directory. Many of the vendors that DSA partners with are unfamiliar with the city's WMBE goals and business directory. DSA has worked to educate all vendors on these additional opportunities.

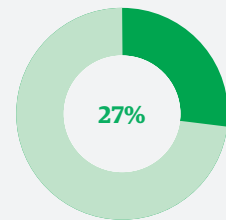


\$226,316
spent on WMBE
18% of all expenses

As programming and activations returned to the parks in summer and fall 2021, a significant amount of expenses were directed toward WMBE artists and vendors.



Overall WMBE Aspirational Goal



July-December 2021 WMBE Outcome

In partnership with



SEATTLE PARKS FOUNDATION



Occidental Square and Westlake Park are managed by the Downtown Seattle Association in partnership with Seattle Parks and Recreation.

downtownseattle.org/parks