



Downtown
Seattle
Association

Metropolitan
Improvement
District



Westlake Park & Occidental Square **Activation Report**

Jan. 1-June 30, 2023

Through a public/nonprofit partnership with Seattle Parks and Recreation, the Downtown Seattle Association, with funding from the Metropolitan Improvement District, works together 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 \$14.43—providing a smart, efficient leveraging of SPR dollars to enhance and activate Westlake and Occidental parks.

Downtown Revitalization

In the first half of 2023, both parks saw increases in visits, with Occidental Square increasing by 65% and Westlake growing 9% compared to the previous year.

Assisting Visitors in Need

Since June 2022, MID ambassadors provided more than 1,100 welfare checks and outreach services to park visitors in need.

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 was extended through August 2023. 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;
- 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.

Estimated Park Visits

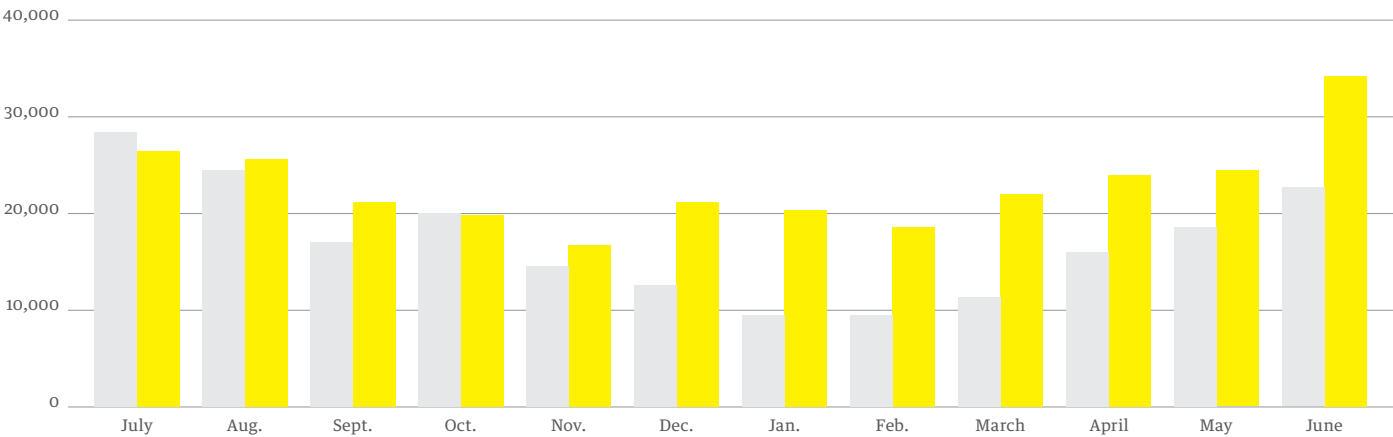
Jan. 1-June 30, 2023

A key part of DSA’s park-activation strategy is daily staffing with ambassadors. They are in the parks almost every day of the year, rain or shine. Ambassadors are stewards of the public realm and help make it an inviting and welcoming place for all. Each day they set up and put away the daily amenities in the parks such as furniture, signage and games, as well as provide support for park programming and events. Ambassadors work to make the parks a clean, safe and welcoming environment for all. Some big events during this period were Lunar New Year celebrations, an ongoing busker series and food truck festivals.

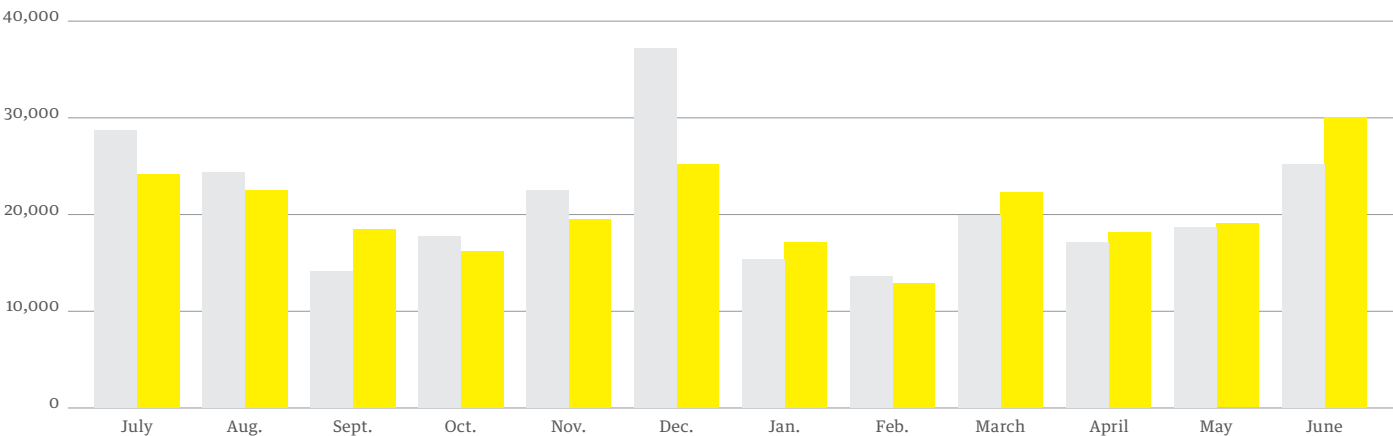
Key Findings

- In the first six months of 2023, both parks saw strong growth in park visits with Occidental Square increasing by 65% and Westlake growing 9% compared to the previous year.
- In particular, Occidental Square saw very strong growth with the first six months of 2023 nearly equaling total visits in 2021 and two-thirds of the visits the park saw in 2022.
- For both parks, June was one of the most improved months for visitor traffic as the summer tourist season began.

OCCIDENTAL



WESTLAKE



Changing Park Perceptions

2019, 2021 and 2023 Summer Surveys

Surveys were conducted in both Westlake Park and Occidental Square in early summer. These surveys are key to measuring park visitors' perceptions of Westlake and Occidental parks as clean, safe and welcoming public spaces.

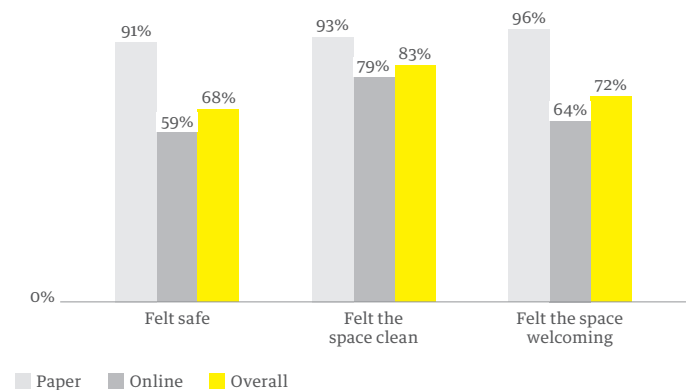
DSA sought a broad survey sample population. Paper surveys were again made available in each park after not being used in 2021 due to pandemic precautions. Surveys were also distributed widely via email and hosted on the DSA website. Online versions of the survey were also available in Spanish and Chinese.

Key Findings

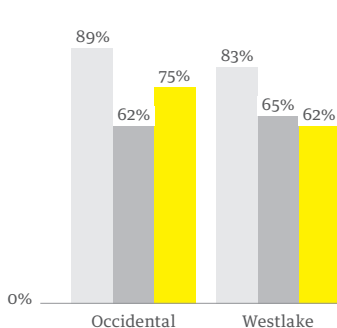
- In the aftermath of the pandemic, both parks saw some declines in perceptions of the parks being safe and welcoming places, with modest declines in perceptions of cleanliness.
- From 2019 to 2023, Westlake Park saw the sharpest decline in perceptions of safety and being welcoming, declining 21 and 23 points, respectively.
- Interestingly, there were significant differences between those responding online versus using paper surveys.
- Of those respondents who completed paper surveys, 91% felt the parks were safe (compared to 59% online), and 96% felt the parks were welcoming (compared to 64% online).
- While at least partly attributable to self-selection bias, results indicate that getting former park visitors to return will be challenging, but critical to changing overall perceptions.



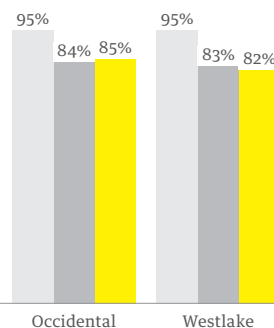
RESULTS BY SURVEY TYPE / SUMMER 2023



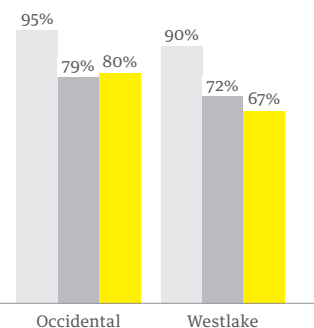
FELT SAFE



FOUND THE SPACE CLEAN



FOUND THE SPACE WELCOMING



Westlake Park 2023 survey (n=148), 2021 survey (n=183) and 2019 survey (n=268).

Occidental Square 2023 survey (n=115), 2021 (n=73) and 2019 (n=198).

2023 respondents by type: online (n=194) and paper (n=72).

2019 2021 2023



Park Activation Revenue & Expenses / Jan. 1-June 30, 2023

REVENUE

Seattle Parks and Recreation Funding	\$50,000
MID Funding	\$718,256
Other Income (e.g., permit fees, in-kind donations)	\$3,190
Total Revenue	\$771,446

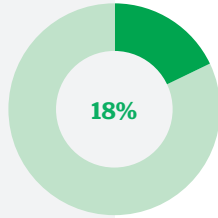
EXPENSES

Park Staffing & Security	\$636,144
Activations (e.g., buskers, arts & crafts)	\$114,840
Equipment (e.g., lighting, planters)	\$5,099
Other Expenses (e.g., marketing, uniforms)	\$15,363
Total Expenses	\$771,446
Net Income	\$0

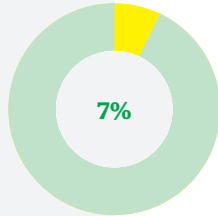
PERMIT FEE EVENTS

Reach Ministry	March 31, 2023	\$75
International Society for Krishna Consciousness of Washington	April 1, 2023	\$135
Falun Dafa Association of Washington	April 15, 2023	\$145
United Revival	June 17, 2023	\$240
Pioneer Square Summer Market	June 17, 2023	\$2,595
Total Event Permit Fees		\$3,190





Overall WMBE
Aspirational Goal



January-June 2023
WMBE Outcome

\$53,902
spent on WMBE
7% of all expenses



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.

Caring for Park Visitors in Need

Providing outreach and support to individuals in need is another key component of the park-activation strategy. Ambassadors work to help visitors in need and establish relationships with those who might need assistance.

Since June 2022, MID ambassadors have provided more than 1,100 welfare checks and outreach support to park visitors in need. During this period, there were 460 welfare checks conducted in Westlake Park and 677 in Occidental Square.

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