



Downtown  
Seattle  
Association

Metropolitan  
Improvement  
District



## Westlake Park & Occidental Square **Activation Report**

July 1-Dec. 31, 2023

Through a public/nonprofit partnership with Seattle Parks and Recreation, the Downtown Seattle Association, with funding from the Metropolitan Improvement District, works 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 \$48.77 – providing a smart, efficient leveraging of SPR dollars to enhance and activate Westlake and Occidental parks.

### Downtown Revitalization

In the second half of 2023, both parks saw strong increases in park visits, with Occidental Square increasing by 57% and Westlake growing 7% compared to the previous year.

### Shifting Perceptions

Both parks saw sharp improvements in perceptions of them being clean, safe and welcoming spaces compared to surveys taken during the pandemic.

## 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 December 2023. This innovative public/nonprofit collaboration with Seattle Parks and Recreation has 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

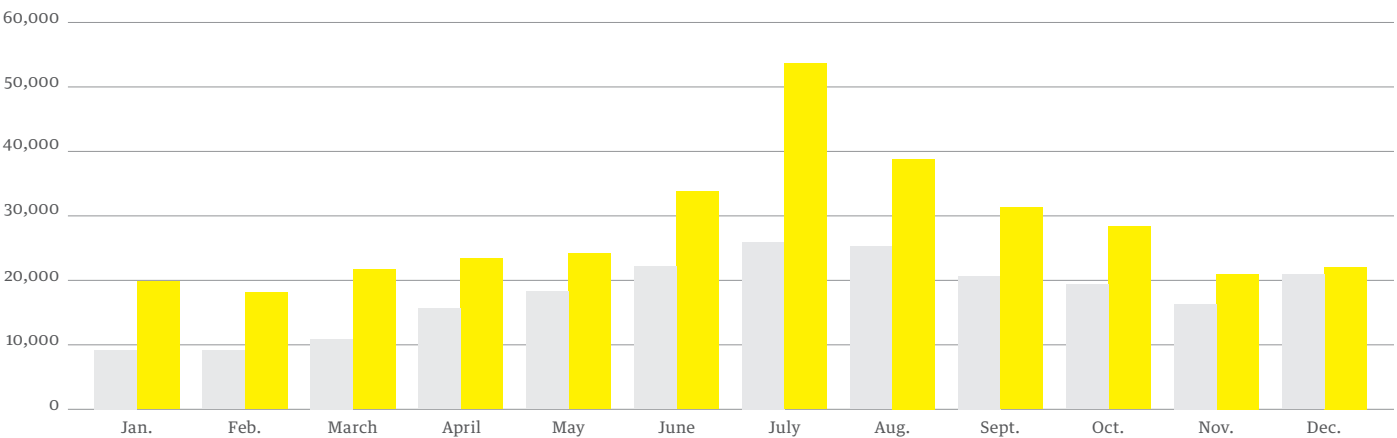
## July 1-Dec. 31, 2023

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. Last summer saw a big return of visitors to Occidental Square as there was significant programming around MLB All-Star Week, major concerts and sporting events. During the holiday season, Westlake Park continued as the central hub for downtown holiday festivities attracting thousands of visitors during the winter months.

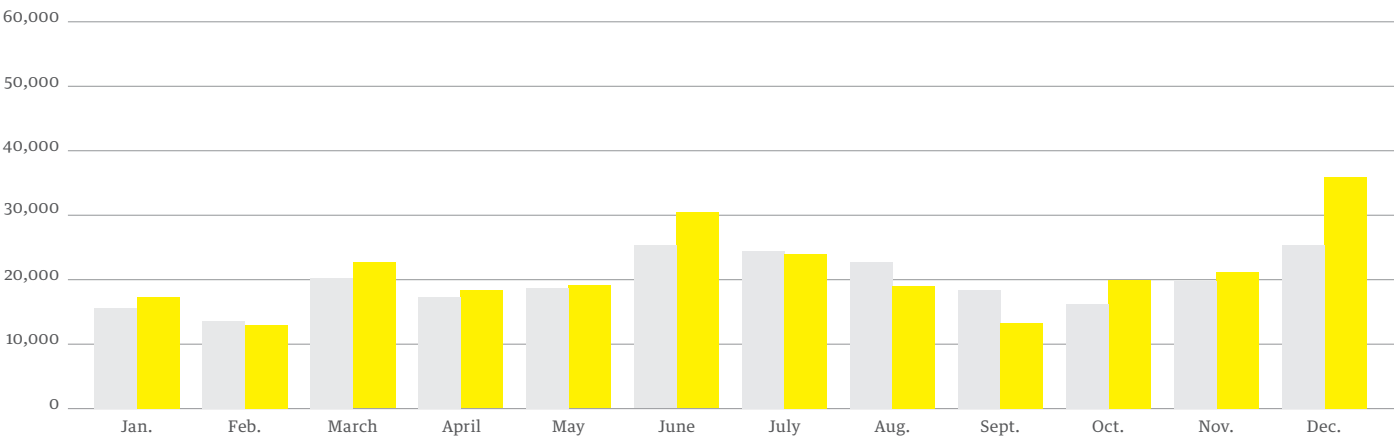
### Key Findings

- In 2023, both Occidental Square and Westlake Park saw significant improvement in foot traffic with the number of park visits increasing by 57% and 7%, respectively, compared to 2022.
- Occidental Square saw an especially sharp increase from June-August, increasing 71% year-over-year primarily due to All-Star Week festivities, strong attendance at sporting events and several major concerts.
- Westlake Park saw an increase in visitors over the holiday period with December seeing a 42% increase in park foot traffic compared to the previous year. This was the second-highest month of visits to Westlake Park since the start of pandemic.

#### OCCIDENTAL



#### WESTLAKE



# Changing Park Perceptions

## Surveys: Summer 2021 and 2023, Winter 2023

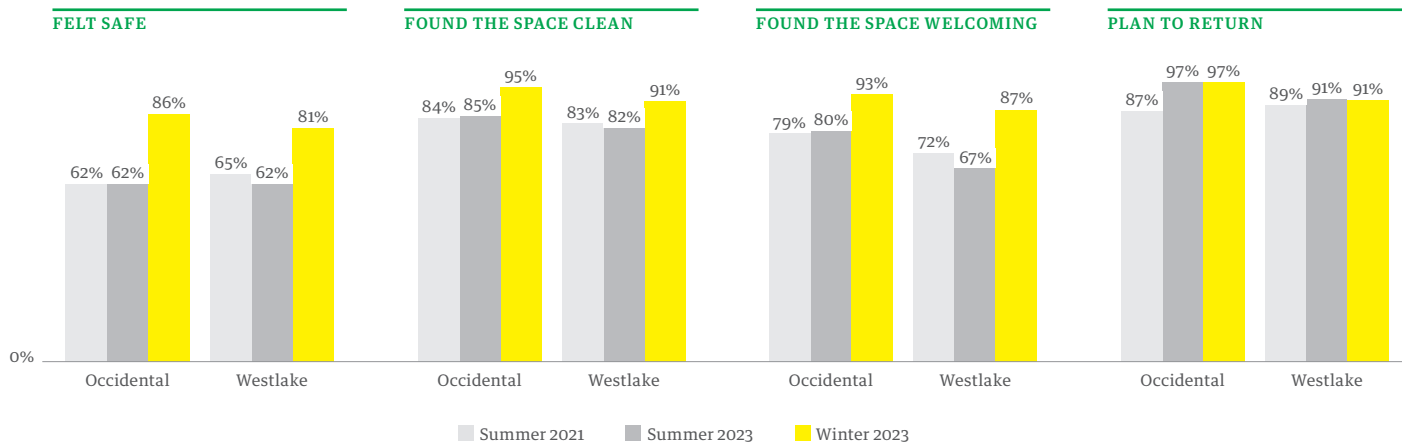


Surveys are conducted twice a year, typically during the summer and holiday seasons. These surveys are key to measuring park visitors' perceptions of Westlake and Occidental parks as clean, safe and welcoming public spaces.

Seeking a broad sample population, surveys were distributed through a variety of methods and in multiple locations. Paper surveys were available in both parks and an electronic version was distributed via email and hosted on the DSA website. Online versions of the survey were also available in Spanish and Chinese.

### Key Findings

- After experiencing pandemic-related declines in the number of visitors finding the parks clean, safe and welcoming spaces, both parks saw significant improvements in perception levels in the most recent survey.
- Westlake Park saw a large improvement in perceptions of park safety with 81% of respondents indicating they felt safe – a 19-point increase compared to perceptions found in the summer 2023 survey.
- Westlake Park also experienced a 20-point increase from the summer survey in those finding the space welcoming, improving to 87%.
- Occidental Square also saw a return to pre-pandemic perception levels of the park being clean, safe and welcoming.



Westlake Park surveys: summer 2021 (n=183), summer 2023 (n=148) and winter 2023 (n=263).

Occidental Square surveys: summer 2021 (n=73), summer 2023 (n=115) and winter 2023 (n=173).



## Park Activation Revenue & Expenses / July 1-Dec. 31, 2023

### REVENUE

Seattle Parks and Recreation funding	\$25,000
Sponsorship	\$42,000
MID funding	\$1,154,422
Permits	\$18,045
Food trucks	\$ 4,804
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>\$1,244,271</b>

### EXPENSES

Park staffing and security	\$812,802
Activations (e.g., buskers, arts & crafts)	\$346,807
Equipment (e.g., lighting, planters)	\$16,699
Fixed assets	\$40,869
Other expenses (e.g., marketing, uniforms)	\$27,094
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$1,244,271</b>

<b>Net income</b>	<b>\$0</b>
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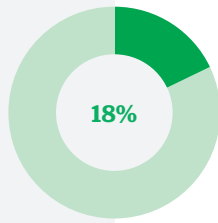
### PERMIT FEE EVENTS

Sounders Soundcheck	July 1, Sept. 7 and Oct. 7, 2023	\$2,535
MLA – Aquarium Event with PNC Bank	July 22, 2023	\$975
Ride Amigos Event	Aug. 1, 2023	\$1,135
TripleClix PAX Activation	Aug. 31, 2023	\$12,700
Sezane Flower Pop-Up	Oct. 21, 2023	\$700

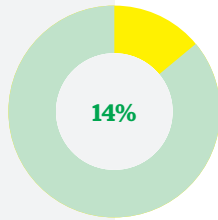
<b>Total event permit fees</b>	<b>\$18,045</b>
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Overall WMBE  
Aspirational Goal



July-December 2023  
WMBE Outcome

**\$170,014**  
spent on WMBE  
*14% 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 and continue to look for new ways to provide access and opportunity to WMBE and other BIPOC businesses and artists in the parks.

Between July-December 2023, DSA/MID directed more than \$170,000 toward WMBE businesses, representing nearly 14% of total expenses during the period. In addition

to this funding, the parks welcomed a significant number of WMBE-owned food trucks into the parks. In 2023, 36 different WMBE food trucks made 487 park visits, generating more than \$315,000 in food truck sales.

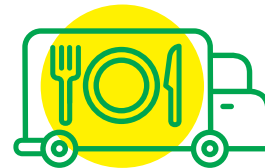
Many of the vendors that DSA/MID partners with are unfamiliar with the city's WMBE goals and business directory. DSA encourages current WMBE vendors to register and participate in the city's WMBE directory and learn about additional opportunities.

## 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.

In 2023, MID ambassadors provided 549 welfare checks and outreach support to park visitors in need. In the past year, there were 301 welfare checks in Westlake Park and 248 in Occidental Square.

### WMBE FOOD TRUCK SNAPSHOT



**\$318,760**

total 2023 revenue

**36**

unique food trucks  
in Westlake Park

**487**

appearances

In partnership with



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

[downtownseattle.org/parks](https://downtownseattle.org/parks)