

Solidarity Budget 2023:

Budget to Live, Budget to Thrive

The 2023 Seattle Solidarity Budget is a collective call toward a city budget that centers the needs of the most marginalized and vulnerable Seattle residents, responds with funding that is commensurate with the crises we are facing, and prioritizes collective care and liberation. Our struggles to build a more equitable Seattle are interconnected. The places in our city where inequality cuts most deeply are also the places most heavily policed. At the core of the Solidarity Budget is our refusal to allow our movements to be pitted against each other for funding. Divesting from police, courts, and prosecutors and investing in Black communities goes hand in hand with climate justice work and housing justice work and participatory budgeting.

The budget we created in 2022 remains our central background demand. But because our vision for a city where all can thrive has not been funded, conditions this year have worsened. This has been the deadliest year yet for our unhoused neighbors, with at least 87 deaths in Seattle so far this year. Our county jail has a suicide rate eight times higher than the national average, and our overfunded police department, municipal court, and city attorneys office continue to feed our people into this deadly cage. Pedestrians and bikers continue to die due to underfunding in transit infrastructure, with 27% of those who perished experiencing homelessness in the last five years. We are fighting for our lives. Our dire conditions thus lead us to call for a *Budget to Live*. And because survival is the bare minimum, Solidarity Budget continues to be a demand for a *Budget to Thrive*.

BUDGET TO LIVE

BUDGET TO END JAIL AND POLICING DEATHS

King County Jail has become a death trap, with more deaths in four months this year than in all of last year, and a suicide rate eight times the national average. The misdemeanor punishment system in Seattle continues to act as designed, funneling people with serious mental health issues or other disabilities to our deadly jail. Meanwhile, SPD continues to murder people experiencing mental health crises. Our budget should not go toward putting our most vulnerable community members at risk of death for crimes of poverty and unaddressed mental health needs. To end jail deaths and policing deaths, our 2023 budget must:

Defund SPD. The Seattle Police Department continues to perpetrate violence while failing to create safety for the vast majority of the people of Seattle, despite being overfunded for decades. We know true safety will come from redistributing SPD's budget to meet basic needs, fully funding community-controlled responses to increase safety and well-being, and reducing contact between SPD and the public. Thus our demands remain:

- Defund SPD by 50% by eliminating position authority and corresponding funding for ghost positions (empty positions SPD has no plans to fill next year), reducing funding for existing positions, and ending funding for new hires and hiring incentives.
- End police spending on new tech, new buildings, new weapons, and police public relations.
- Ensure expanded public safety responses are placed outside of SPD.
- End hiring and retention bonuses for SPD and shift that funding to compensate culturally-appropriate treatment providers.

Defund City Attorney's Office and Seattle Municipal Court. Defunding SPD also means divesting from the rest of the punishment pipeline, and ending misdemeanor criminalization as the default response to conflict, harm, and need in the City of Seattle. Most of the individuals prosecuted in SMC are facing housing instability if not currently houseless, and a large percentage are living with serious mental health challenges requiring support best given outside the criminal legal system. Even if an individual survives their time in the deadly King County Jail, the budgets of the City Attorney's Office and SMC are used to separate families, depress wages, and inflict long-lasting emotional distress, among other irreparable harms. Thus our demands remain:

- Defund Criminal Division of CAO and Punishment division of SMC by eliminating courtrooms and shrinking the number of cases prosecuted.
- Shift funding from these agencies to create permanent supportive housing and treatment.

BUDGET TO END TRAFFIC DEATHS

So far in 2022, there have been 15 deaths and 137 life-altering injuries due to traffic collisions on Seattle's streets. Despite Seattle's Vision Zero goal to reach zero by 2030, these numbers have been increasing. To end traffic deaths, our 2023 budget must:

- Fund Vision Zero, including spot improvements such as daylighting intersections, adding curb bulbs, left turn pockets, hardened center lines, and raised crosswalks, as well as funding safety projects in SODO, on Martin Luther King Jr Way S, Rainier Ave S, and Aurora Ave N.
- Invest in safe streets infrastructure in South Seattle, where traffic deaths are disproportionately taking place (over 50% of traffic deaths in Seattle in 2021 occurred in District 2).
- Fund Transit corridor improvements and build sidewalks on all transit corridors. Maintain existing sidewalks, and improve pedestrian street crossings including curb bulbs, curb cuts, and signal improvements.
- Build safe bike routes connecting every neighborhood, including fully funding the Georgetown to Downtown bike route through SODO and the Beacon Ave S bike route.
- Invest in public community gathering places in our streets such as cafe streets, pedestrian plazas, and park-like amenities such as tree coverage, trash collection, benches, and public art.

As part of the larger movement to defund the police, Seattle should:

- Remove the Seattle Police Department from traffic enforcement entirely, and cease officer patrols and stops for speeding and other traffic violations. See the [Whose Streets? Our Streets! Workgroup Recommendations Summary](#), for more detailed information.
- Remove crash responses and crash data collection from the jurisdiction of the Seattle Police Department.
- Ensure that revenue from traffic tickets is re-invested into safe streets projects, not directed to the general fund.

BUDGET TO END DEATHS OF HOUSELESS PEOPLE

The city of Seattle is on track to surpass all-time records for deaths of houseless people; alongside the rise of encampment removals this year, at least 87 homeless people [have died in Seattle](#). Black people and Native American and Alaska Native people are disproportionately represented in homeless deaths, as they are in the homeless population as a whole. In the last year, the City of Seattle has spent over \$50 million dollars on sweeps to forcibly tear down encampments. Yet sweeps and hot spot policing do not address the root causes of violence, and only push incidents out to surrounding areas. Sweeps make it harder for people to find jobs, education, and services. They make it harder to link up with culturally-appropriate case management services and existing outreach programs. Sweeps punish our community by worsening our living conditions. They are a costly, rotating door that wastes our taxpayer dollars, making everyone in the neighborhood less safe because they worsen the conditions that lead to isolation, harm, and violence. The City's current policies are proving fatal for our homeless neighbors.

To end deaths of houseless people, we demand a budget that

- Places a moratorium on sweeps and RV mitigations and redirect funds to consistent and meaningful outreach, harm reduction services and safe, secure permanent supportive housing that meets the real needs of unhoused/unstably housed people.
- Maintains pro-active sanitation and safety at current encampment sites for beautiful neighborhoods without punishment, coercion, or enforcement.
- Ensures a full spectrum of culturally appropriate harm reduction and treatment options to prevent overdose deaths.
- Funds and resources community-based responses to public safety (\$20M for community-developed or community-led solutions to increase safety and reduce violence)
- Funds the Mobile Pit Stop Program (MPSP). MPSP provides clean and safe public toilets, as well as used needle containers and dog waste stations. MPSP launched in San Francisco in 2014, and the model has expanded to Los Angeles, Denver, and Miami. This program has been successful in providing a regular place for individuals to use the bathroom, as well as a known location to safely dispose of pet waste and needles. None of the 6 public toilets in Seattle have sharps containers, meaning that individuals living outside with diabetes do not always have a place to safely dispose of their syringes.

This program won funding in the 2020 budget. However, the former mayor repurposed the funds. (\$1.3M which was won before the pandemic and never allocated would create 5 Mobile Pit Stops.)

- Funds Vehicle Safe Lots with wraparound services. We call for funding to immediately launch nine new vehicle safe lots to support people living in their RVs and other vehicles. This includes ongoing case management, permanent housing search, and support services. If the city had fully funded safe lots in 2022, there would now be less displacement for people living in RVs and vehicles. Some funds were won last year, but KCRHA is not using these funds for safe lots; funds should be earmarked specifically to serve people living in RVs and other vehicles who currently are being shuffled around the city with no end in sight and minimal services offered. (\$20M)

BUDGET TO THRIVE: MEETING UNIVERSAL NEEDS AND SUPPORTING ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

PUBLIC CONTROL OVER PUBLIC MONEY

The Seattle City Council committed \$30M toward participatory budgeting (PB) in the 2021 budget. PB is a democratic process by which community members decide how to spend a portion of a public budget and it has been a practice in Seattle since 2015. The Black Brilliance Research Project (BBR) laid the groundwork for a PB process that centers Black lives and Black well-being in an unprecedented way, leading us to a city where all people can survive and thrive. Power comes from the people and our budgeting decisions should too. We should develop our budget solutions together, following the lead of those most impacted and those actually doing the work on the ground.

To continue to develop public control over public money, and put budgeting in people's hands we demand the 2023 Budget:

- Invest in an annual Black-led and centered PB process. (\$60M for 2023 - increase this amount by \$5M annually until it reaches \$200M)
- Annual implementation cost for PB (\$3M)

PUBLIC MONEY FOR PUBLIC WORKERS

Solidarity Budget continues to demand a public safety strategy that divests from harmful systems and invests in basic needs like housing, support services, and crisis response. However, the City of Seattle continues to prioritize supporting police officers over all other city-funded workers. A true public safety strategy requires investing in the development of a stable, quality workforce in crisis response, homeless services and housing, and a pool to support hiring, training, and retention of a diverse, skilled workforce to sustain and increase quality care in crisis response, housing and homeless services.

Our demands include:

- No soft cops in any City of Seattle departments. We need true community-led public safety initiatives that have no connection to SPD. Police by another name (such as "Rangers" in the Parks Department) will continue the status quo. Soft cops are not alternatives to policing, they are police disguised as care.
- Address Inflation - Increase funding for all homeless and housing contracts to account for inflation in Seattle. In the 2022 budget, the city only accounted for 2.4% inflation, when inflation was nearly three times that amount. Over the last 12 months, the [Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers \(CPI-U\)](#) increased 9.0 percent. Food prices advanced 11.6 percent, and energy prices rose 16.0 percent, largely the result of an increase in the price of gasoline. As the cost of doing business in Seattle increases, the City of Seattle must increase contracts for crisis response, homeless services, and housing by at least 6% so as not to put the burden on already cash-strapped nonprofit organizations.
- Raise the floor for the people who keep the doors open: ensure that no full time employee, whether providing janitorial care, crisis, response, outreach, case management, facilities, or other services earns less than \$25 an hour, and increase contracts to stabilize and strengthen the workforce. Create capacity to develop specific plans to increase wages, pool benefits, offer tuition or loan forgiveness, support formal education or professional skill development, and cross-train in partnership with KCRHA and King County. (\$25M)
- Hiring incentives - The City of Seattle continues to invest in violent systems like policing and courts, which have been proven over decades of failed reforms to be ineffective at providing public safety to all community members. At the same time, the city ignores workers who are serving some of our city's most vulnerable community members through homeless services and housing. We demand the City of Seattle match the current hiring incentives for SPD with hiring incentives for all service providers providing public safety through crisis response, homeless services and housing (\$30K for each service provider with experience and \$7.5K for each new service provider).

HOUSING FOR ALL

When Seattle becomes a city where all people's basic needs are met, Black and Native communities who currently bear the brunt of violent policing will experience public safety for the first time. This vision requires that one of the most basic public safety strategies - housing for all - be fully funded. Therefore, we demand:

- Rapid Acquisition of Existing Housing - We are still feeling the impacts of the pandemic that depressed the values of multifamily apartments and hotels. A fund for rapid acquisition of existing housing will accelerate buying up existing buildings and conversion to affordable housing. This will provide 300-600 units of affordable housing. (\$100 million)
- Seed money for Social Housing Developer (\$15-20M in capital grants for bonding and construction + \$7M administrative & staffing)
- Tenant Services - Seattle has seen an increase in evictions, and with the lifting of the eviction moratorium, more people are at risk of eviction. Fund community based organizations to prevent

displacement by educating tenants about renter protections and resources, connecting tenants to City or other renter services, providing guidance and support in tenant organizing, providing legal aid, and growing the power and leadership of renters in communities that are especially vulnerable to displacement, including, but not limited to, BIPOC communities, elders, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, students, formerly incarcerated and/or homeless, immigrants and refugees, people who speak English as a second language, American Indian, Alaska Natives, and members of the Duwamish Tribe. (\$5M)

HEALTHY CLIMATE FUTURES

To achieve true safety, we must have a comprehensive plan that addresses how we interact with our environment and how we prepare our community to be impacted by our environment. When most communities, and in particular when marginalized communities, are surveyed or asked to define safety or what makes them feel safe, police and policing do not make the list of priorities. Instead, people name education, healthcare, mental healthcare, temperature controlled and fungus/parasite-free living spaces, clean air, clean neighborhoods, meaningful employment, transportation security, food security, conflict resolution, trust, community, emergency and disaster preparedness infrastructure, and more. And yet, for every dollar Seattle spends on Green New Deal priorities, the city currently spends \$40 on policing. The Green New Deal and the Environmental Justice community are forging a path not only toward sustainability, but toward the mitigation and remediation of the negative impacts of climate change and environmental destruction through meaningful, collaborative, equitable, and compensated participation. We must limit the harm that continues to happen, we must prepare for the impacts we cannot stall, and we must build collective power and ownership through a distributed model of inclusion and participation.

To achieve a healthy climate future, we demand that the 2023 Budget:

- Fully fund the Green New Deal (\$23M).

In 2019, environmental justice communities across Seattle came together to advocate for the creation of a Green New Deal for climate policy within the city that would help eliminate Seattle's climate pollution by 2030, address historic harms, and move towards environmental justice. It called for the creation of an oversight board consisting of impacted community members, labor and technical experts who would guide the city on Green New Deal investments and policies. Collectively, and after extensive input from the community, the oversight board came up with a list of recommendations for the 2023 budget. Simultaneously the environmental justice community has been organizing for months to identify new and standing climate priorities for 2023. Our demands are informed by and aligned with these community-based recommendations. They include, but are not limited to:

- Prioritizing and funding Indigenous-led climate and sustainability projects. Centering Indigenous priorities has been a top priority for the Solidarity Budget Coalition and we continue to demand the City to invest in and lift up Indigenous-led sustainability projects

(\$400,000). We ask the City to ensure that it only partners with energy utilities and financial institutions that have engaged in Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) with impacted Indigenous communities, to put a stop to resource colonialism.

- Additional funding for the Environmental Justice Fund (\$850,000) to ensure continued support and resources for community-led environmental justice projects.
- Climate Resiliency (\$6,000,000). While climate change affects all of us, it affects our Black, Indigenous, other people of color, immigrants, low income, working class, disabled and other communities on the frontlines disproportionately, across the world. Yet it is these communities that continue to be resilient in the face of climate change. Each of our communities understand what makes us resilient in the face of adversity and climate crisis. We thus call for the City to:
 - Fund studies to identify City and community-owned facilities that could serve as climate resilience hubs. Every Seattle resident should be within a 15 minute walk or bus-ride of this life saving infrastructure.
 - Fund climate resilience hub strategies and projects at City and community owned facilities, as well as existing community and cultural anchors that are hubs already (which may include spaces like cafes, mom and pop stores, parks, and community spaces like Washington Hall).
 - Fund outreach with the community at each step of the process in culturally relevant communication and language services.
- Workforce Development (\$1,000,000).
 - With a focus on Priority Hire individuals and youth, fund pre-apprenticeship training programs and/or job readiness programs to place individuals into registered clean energy apprenticeship programs and/or clean energy jobs.
 - Fund the creation of a worker retraining program for certifications and placement into industries that are leading us away from dependence on fossil fuels and/or that are highly polluting so that they may continue to earn living wages while we transition. Examples may include, solar, wind, reclamation, decarbonization, etc.
 - Fund the creation of an apprentice program within the City for community liaisons, community consultants, and community ambassadors to learn how to convene, facilitate, negotiate, advocate, and articulate legislation with community members.
- Fund Seattle's Clean Heat Program (\$6,000,000) for transitioning low income homes off of oil heat. As a continued priority from previous years, we ask the city to bolster the Clean Heat Program with increased funding for capacity development, workforce development and outreach, and engagement to help address the urgent need to reduce Seattle's climate pollution, improve the health of our residents as well as create good living-wage jobs. The program should:
 - utilize a portion of the funding to increase outreach and engagement efforts – including efforts to;

- Prioritize subsidies to transition low-income households off oil heat and gas for space & water heating;
 - Prioritize renewable energy investments on public buildings like community centers and libraries;
 - Fund and develop Minority Business Enterprises (MBE) contractors and City Priority Hire practices.
- Transportation is one of the biggest contributors of greenhouse gas emissions for Seattle and WA state. To address the impacts the City of Seattle needs to fund the Electrification of transportation that has a particular focus on public transit with mixed mode options. (\$500,000).
 - Support Seattle's Transportation Electrification Blueprint
 - Incentivize Replacement of Gas and Diesel Vehicles with EVs (\$1,000,000)
 - Prioritize historically under-invested neighborhoods and communities affected by pollution, for example South Seattle neighborhoods in close proximity to the Port of Seattle.