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Date

Address

The Urban Forestry Commission would like to extend our gratitude to the Office of Sustainability and Environment for its efforts supporting the City of Seattle during the COVID-19 crisis, and specifically Lylianna Allala, for taking the time to brief the Commission on the Green New Deal and the planned oversight board. The UFC is a strong supporter and ally of this initiative and appreciates the background on the organizational progress to-date.

The UFC recognizes the complexity inherent when building such a public resolution and establishing initial priorities, but wishes to take this opportunity to highlight our support of specific actions called for in the GND, their connection to ongoing restoration efforts, and ability to catalyze a green economy in Seattle.

In particular, section 13 addresses climate related risks and the urgent need of “protecting the health of all its residents, especially those most vulnerable to these changes, and supporting strong, resilient communities.” Part of these efforts are “D: Creating more green spaces and preserving and adapting existing green spaces to make communities more resilient to floods and extreme heat; and J: encouraging preservation and planting of trees citywide to increase the city’s tree canopy cover, prioritizing historically low-canopy and low-income neighborhoods while working closely with communities to protect against eco-gentrification.”

As the City of Seattle responds to the current COVID crisis and unemployment concerns, the UFC sees an opportunity to establish climate resiliency as a primary objective of the GND and creating the necessary workforce to support these efforts. The creation and maintenance of green spaces and urban forests will provide job opportunities for additional arborists, landscape engineers, urban planners, gardeners, and restoration crews. This also presents an opportunity to train the next generation of green professionals, prioritizing youth recruitment from neighborhoods that are identified for climate resiliency efforts. This will inspire and generate neighborhood stewardship and engage community stakeholders in the planning, creation, and ongoing maintenance efforts.

Building this pathway for green jobs is a long-term process in-line with the time required to properly invest in green spaces throughout Seattle’s neighborhoods. Rather than viewing this time commitment as an obstacle, the UFC encourages the oversight board to prioritize it and begin the necessary programming and job training. The ongoing City programs, such as the Green Seattle Partnership, Seattle Tree Ambassadors, Youth Green Corps, and Seattle Conservation Corps present an opportunity to leverage existing City resources to catalyze these efforts.

Seattle’s urban forest is under extreme stress due to climate impacts, invasive species, and the pace of development. The further loss of these assets to our City would create a devastating deficit in ecological and financial functions. For example, reports commissioned by the City of Seattle estimate that the urban

forest removes 725 metric tons of pollutants annually<sup>1</sup>, valued at \$5.62 million, and the urban forests saves \$5.9 million in energy costs by providing shade to our buildings<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, the prioritization of creating and maintaining Seattle's urban forestry supports additional community resiliency efforts such as stormwater mitigation, reducing urban heat islands, air pollution, flooding, and erosion. As our region continues to experience climate change impacts, these benefits provided by a healthy urban forest will only increase in magnitude.

The UFC is comprised of urban forestry professionals and stakeholders, and we offer our expertise and experiences in guiding the development of these new programs to support urban forestry growth and maintenance.

Thank you for your continued efforts to improve the sustainability and resiliency of our City.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Trees/Mangement/EcoSystem/Seattles\\_Forest\\_Ecosystem\\_Values\\_Report.pdf](https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Trees/Mangement/EcoSystem/Seattles_Forest_Ecosystem_Values_Report.pdf) - pg. 14

<sup>2</sup>

[https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Trees/Mangement/EcoSystem/Seattles\\_Forest\\_Ecosystem\\_Values\\_Report.pdf](https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Trees/Mangement/EcoSystem/Seattles_Forest_Ecosystem_Values_Report.pdf) – pg. 16