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February 15, 2022

RE: Tree Service Provider Registration ordinance amendments

Dear Chair Strauss and members of Land Use Committee,

Duwamish Lands (Seattle, WA) – The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) thanks you for the invitation to participate in discussions regarding the proposed amendments to the tree service provider (TSP) registration bill. The UFC also thanks you for bringing the newly forming Seattle Arborist Association to the table. This association is providing important perspective on the practical implications of the new registration system. The UFC offers the following remarks about four main topics relating to the TSP amendments: online public notice system, public notice requirements, third party verification, and implementation:

1. The UFC agrees that an online public notice system is a great idea. The UFC urges the Council to **ensure that data is sufficient to identify the tree on which work will be conducted**, including diameter at breast height (DBH), tree species and reason for removal. Geographic coordinates of the tree would be ideal, and a general assessment of tree health and condition would be useful. The UFC recommends that this **data be integrated with SDOT tree data** and should be publicly accessible.
2. **The UFC urges the Council to require TSPs to physically display a public notice on site as work is occurring rather than 3 days in advance.** Public notice on the online system could be valid for a much longer time, such that arborists could complete tree work anytime during, say, a two-month window. The three-day on-site posting requirement is burdensome. It can cause loss of money and business if scheduled work is cancelled with short notice and TSPs have not met posting requirements for other tree work anticipated to be completed later. Additionally, posting public notices while work is occurring allows community members to know when legitimate tree work is occurring and so that TSPs are not interrupted by concerned neighbors. Since enforcement of our tree regulations is complaint based, public notice is important.

Furthermore, the UFC recommends the Council **lighten proposed penalties for not complying with posting requirements**. Failing to post three times, which could be due to trivial clerical or administrative errors, can result in loss of ability to work in Seattle which

could bankrupt some companies. Such a harsh penalty does not seem proportional to the offense. The UFC **suggests a penalty be implemented after failing to post 6 times.**

Commented [LK1]: I think we should suggest an alternative more chill penalty - failing to post 5 times? 10 times?

3. The third-party verification for hazard tree removal proposed with the amendments adds an undue financial burden to clients, and the UFC believes **a solution should be provided for achieving the third-party verifications to relieve that burden.** As one possible solution, the UFC is curious to know if SDCI has capacity to perform third-party verification. The UFC recommends the Council **approve budget for SDCI to hire additional arborists** necessary to serve as evaluators of tree work. Many arborists feel that the city should allow SDCI arborists to decide if a third-party assessment for hazard tree removal permit is necessary, as is the practice of neighboring municipalities. However, SDCI arborist review capacity is severely limited; this level of work cannot be added without additional capacity. Another potential solution is to require random checks rather than verifications on every project, to save costs and reduce burden on staff capacity.
4. The UFC urges the Council to **comprehensively communicate with arborists** including the Seattle Arborists Association **about future TSP registration requirements and do so over an extended period of time determined by the Seattle Arborists Association.** The UFC also urges the Council to communicate and collaborate with **horticulturalists and landscapers**, who are often trimming hedges and fruit trees and may unknowingly be engaging in reportable work.

Commented [LK2]: Should we specify a length of time these conversations should be happening?

The UFC thanks Chair Strauss and other members of Seattle City Council's Land Use Committee for their attention to tree service provider registration.

Sincerely,