

# Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

Leif Fixen, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair

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August 12, 2015.

Mayor Ed Murray, Councilmember Sally Bagshaw, and Councilmember Jean Godden  
Seattle City Hall  
600 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: Increased 2016 funding for City Fruit

Dear Mayor Murray, CM Bagshaw, and CM Godden,

The local non-profit City Fruit briefed the Commission on their accomplishments of the past two years. City fruit promotes the cultivation of urban fruit in order to nourish people, build community, and protect our climate. They help fruit tree owners grow healthy fruit, provide assistance in harvesting and preserving fruit, promote the sharing of extra fruit, and work to protect and maintain urban fruit trees.

The Commission has been supportive of City Fruit's Orchard Stewardship program. In 2013 the Commission encouraged the City to explore partnerships with City Fruit and we have been very pleased to see the increased impact City Fruit has had in Seattle's public orchards. With dedicated City funding City Fruit went from harvesting 10,000 pounds of fruit with 176 volunteers in 2013 to harvesting over 27,000 pounds of fruit with 561 volunteers in 2014. We would like to encourage the City to keep supporting this highly successful program by fully funding City Fruit's 2016 activities in Seattle's public orchards with \$81,000.

This partnership has created tangible benefits for the City of Seattle. More than 30 Seattle parks have fruit trees –many of them are the remnants of heritage orchards, while others are part of newly created community gardens. Seattle Parks and Recreation's landscaping budgets historically have not been able to cover the costs of the specialized pruning, pest management, and harvest needs of fruit trees. City Fruit currently maintains 375 trees throughout our public orchards, engaging community members and highly skilled volunteers to help with their care. Thus far in 2015, City Fruit has provided 475 hours of fruit tree pruning. If the City paid for this same service, it would amount to at least \$23,000 in costs. In addition, these trees are of value to the community as a source of food, canopy cover, and as a link to Seattle's past.

During the briefing, the Commission became aware that that in 2016, funding for City Fruit's work is being reduced to \$28,000 (down from \$59,000 in 2014 and \$68,000 in 2015). Without continued funding, City Fruit will be forced to dramatically scale back the Orchard Stewardship program. They will lose the momentum and community support built through the last two years. City Fruit's 2016 planned budget is \$350,000 and they are requesting \$81,000 from the City.

There is clear community support for fruit trees. This year, they have doubled their volunteer recruitment from 2014 in just six months. The organization has worked with over 50 meal programs, food banks, and community organizations to efficiently distribute the fruit (picked fruit never travels more than five miles to its final donation destination).

In 2015 alone, City Fruit has worked with area nurseries to distribute over 600 fruit trees to private tree owners. Homeowners, who often inherit their trees, receive guidance on the care and maintenance of the trees. Fallen, unusable fruit goes into compost bins rather than becoming pest issues or safety hazards along sidewalks and rights-of-way. This represents a significant contribution to the urban canopy and aligns nicely with the goals of Seattle's Urban Forest Stewardship Plan.

We hope you consider increasing City Fruit's 2016 funding to \$81,000 in order to continue to engage Seattle's residents in the sustainable care of our urban fruit trees and continue to support our needy through food donations to local food banks.

Sincerely,



Leif Fixen, Chair

cc: Council President Burgess, Councilmember Harrell, Councilmember Licata, Councilmember Okamoto, Councilmember Rasmussen, Councilmember O'Brien, Councilmember Sawant, Jessica Finn Coven, Jesús Aguirre, Catherine Lester, Christopher Williams, Dan Johnson, Doug Critchfield, Eric McConaghy.

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