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September XX, 2023

E-Distributed

Seattle City Council Land Use Committee (SCCLUC)
Chair CM Dan Strauss and Members

RE: Please create a Climate Enhancement Task Force to review Seattle's Tree Protection Ordinance (CB 120534)

Dear Honorable LUC Chair Strauss, Vice Chair Morales, CM Mosqueda, CM Pedersen, CM Nelson, and Seattle City Councilmembers,

On behalf of both the Green New Deal Oversight Board (GNDOB) and the Urban Forestry Commission (UFC), **we ask you to create a Climate Enhancement Task Force to identify improvements to Seattle's Tree Protection Ordinance (TPO) to ensure climate resiliency for frontline communities.**

Trees on private residential and commercial property, largely regulated under the TPO, are the greatest contributors to Seattle's overall tree canopy cover. They are also arguably the most important trees from climate resilience, environmental justice, and public health perspectives, given their proximity to where people live and work. Over the last five years, our city lost 112 acres of tree canopy on private residential and commercial property, a larger loss than occurred in parks. Canopy loss also occurred disproportionately in Environmental Justice Priority Areas during this time.

The TPO is an important tool for reducing canopy loss on private property. It was updated by the City in May 2023. Given the technical complexity and volume of proposed changes, neither the GNDOB nor the UFC believe there was sufficient time to consider, understand, and provide feedback during the TPO update process.

It is not clear to our groups how or if the new TPO will serve its intent, particularly with regard to reducing climate pollutants per the goals of the Green New Deal for Seattle and increasing climate resiliency for vulnerable populations. We believe additional work is needed.

Given the importance of trees on private property to our city's current and future climate resiliency, we ask the Land Use Committee to introduce and pass the simple amendment that was submitted by the Beacon Hill Council to Section 11 on page 61 line 3 as follows:

Section 11. This section establishes the Council's intent for the City to take additional measures to support implementation of the tree protection regulations enacted by this ordinance and enhance Seattle's urban forest. Attachment 1 to this ordinance outlines specific requests to the Executive for future work and additional actions the Council intends to implement related to protecting trees and increasing tree canopy cover on both public and private property.

Attachment 2 to this ordinance includes the establishment of a Tree Ordinance Climate Enhancement Task Force to be co-chaired by representatives from the Urban Forestry Commission and Green New Deal Oversight Board, and includes representatives from the Environmental Committee, civic tree advocacy groups, and relevant City departments and offices. The Task Force will identify improvements to this Tree Ordinance bill to ensure climate frontline community resiliency. The work of the Task Force will be supported by technical assistance from the Department of Natural Resources and a consultant funded at \$30,000 with supervision by the Office of Sustainability. The Task Force will present its report to the full Council by February 2024 for assignment to the Sustainability or Neighborhood Committee for recommended action.

We are open to having the TPO Climate Enhancement Task Force established via a budget proviso.

We stand ready to co-lead the TPO Climate Enhancement Task Force that will develop recommendations for the 2024 Council. We would like to meet with you to answer any questions and discuss any concerns. We look forward to a positive response.

Sincerely,

GND co-chairs

UFC co-chairs

Cc: Mayor Bruce Harrell

About the Green New Deal Oversight Board

The Green New Deal Oversight Board advances the work of establishing a Green New Deal for Seattle. The Seattle Green New Deal Oversight Board is composed of representatives who are passionate about advancing an equitable transition to a clean energy economy, centering frontline communities and workers most impacted by climate change. Responsibilities include identifying policy, program and project gaps or misalignments with the Green New Deal legislation.

About the Urban Forestry Commission

The Urban Forestry Commission advises the Mayor and City Council concerning the establishment of policy and regulations governing the protection, management, and conservation of trees and vegetation in the City of Seattle.