

# Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

Peg Staeheli, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair  
Gordon Bradley • Leif Fixen • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell • Steve Zemke

April 9, 2014.

Councilmember Sally Bagshaw  
Chair, Select Committee on Parks Funding  
Seattle City Hall  
600 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: Putting the Seattle Parks District on the August 5 Ballot

Dear Councilmember Bagshaw,

In accordance with our mission as an advisory body to City Council and the Mayor, the Seattle Urban Forestry Commission supports giving Seattle citizens the opportunity to vote on the contents of Council Bills 118055 and 118056 on the August 5, 2014 ballot.

Our parks, both developed and natural are an essential component in reaching the canopy coverage goals laid out in the City's Urban Forest Stewardship Plan. Chronic underfunding and the current maintenance backlog, particularly in natural areas, directly impact our ability to reach these goals and to sustain the legacy of our parks system and the significant social and ecosystem services it provides.

The bill before Council represents a reduction in funding from the full amounts recommended in the Citizens Advisory Committee Report and should not be cut further if possible. Most critically, we recognize the following goals and programs as essential to the long term health of our urban forest, and recommend funding be maintained as proposed or restored to the levels included in the Citizen's Advisory Committee Report.

- Funding for the Major Maintenance Backlog and Property Management, Increased Preventative Maintenance, and full funding for the Green Seattle Partnership through the Saving our City Forests Fund
- Park Land and Acquisition and Leverage Fund
- Major Projects Challenge Fund
- Funds to Maintain the New Waterfront Park & to Develop and Maintain 15 additional New Parks
- Funds for Activating and Connecting to Greenways
- Neighborhood Park Enhancement Funds
- The Environmental Sustainability Fund

Seattle's urban forest represents a long-term investment in green infrastructure and our quality of life. By creating a stable and reliable funding source, the Seattle Parks District will enable the City to manage and plan for the long term rather than being tied to the uncertainty of recurring levies. Continuing the

cycle of deferred maintenance threatens the health of our natural areas and will result in significant canopy loss and increased costs over the long term. We urge Council to take bold action on behalf of our city parks and urban forest by sending a comprehensive funding plan to the voters on August 5.

Sincerely,



Peg Staeheli, Chair  
Urban Forestry Commission



Jeff Reibman  
Urban forestry Commissioner

cc: Mayor Ed Murray, Council President Burgess, Councilmember Clark, Councilmember Godden, Councilmember Harrell, Councilmember Licata, Councilmember Rasmussen, Councilmember O'Brien, Councilmember Sawant, Jill Simmons, Christopher Williams, Nancy Ahern, Miles Mayhew, Mark Mead, Joanna Nelson de Flores, Steve Lee, Eric McConaghy

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