



SEATTLE GREEN SPACES COALITION
www.seattlegreenspacescoalition.org

May 2, 2019

Seattle City Council
600 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Re: Support for funding the Seattle Natural Capital Assessment, following unanimous 2015 City Council Approval of SLI 75-1-A-2 2015

Dear Council Members:

We strongly urge the Seattle City Council to fund the assessment of Seattle's natural capital, and incorporation of that value into the city's asset portfolio. It follows the City Council's unanimous, November 2015, vote to study its advantages for the city (SLI 75-1-A-2-2015). Our green infrastructure provides more than \$2 billion a year worth of benefits and savings to the City of Seattle, and helps keep our city livable, resilient, equitable and sustainable.

Funding this study, and treating our green infrastructure as a city asset also aligns with the city's many intentions and commitments, including:

- Carbon Reduction – from Mayor Nickels' 2005 U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, to Mayor Durkan's 2018 statements
- Increasing Seattle Tree Canopy to 30% city-wide
- New Tree Ordinance, in accordance with 2008 Urban Forestry Commission guidelines
- Race and Social Equity and Justice
- Livability, Resilience and Sustainability

Councilmember Lisa Herbold seeks a majority of CMs to approve a \$45,000 appropriation to fund a consultant, who would conduct the assessment, and show administrators and departments how to incorporate that value as a booked asset – to be used in cost-benefit analyses, improved financial reporting, resilient policy making and project implementation.

Seattle's green assets include urban forests, wetlands & watersheds, street and private property trees, P-Patches and parks, university campuses, golf courses, and many other properties. Seattle's parks alone – which cover 6200 acres (11% of Seattle's area) – provide nearly \$500 million a year in benefits & savings to this city, according to the 2011 Trust For Public Lands-SPR study.

The \$2-\$3 billion annual value for our natural capital is a conservative estimate. Nearly 70% of urban trees grow on non-park lands – private properties, 190 acres of city-owned

green spaces, and nearly 3500 more acres of Port of Seattle, King County, college-university, Washington State and federal green spaces within the city limits.

This perspective on valuing natural capital "... requires a rethinking of how our government delivers services. ... green infrastructure installations need to be understood and presented as valuable, service-delivery assets that effectively address the same urban challenges as grey infrastructure," according to natural capital experts at Earth Economics. "Such significant innovation within entrenched public systems will surely pose diverse challenges at all levels, but meeting these challenges with bold action centered in shared commitments promises outsized rewards for generations of Americans."

We believe the City Council has the vision and boldness to meet those challenges. A consulting price tag of just \$45,000, for learning how to access \$2-\$3 billion worth of assets is a bargain. This work will create a strong legacy for this City Council, and pay dividends far into the future for Seattle's residents and visitors.

We urge you to approve the appropriation for this important work.

Sincerely,

Elaine Ike, Mary Fleck, Martin Westerman,
Co-founders & Director, Seattle Green Spaces Coalition
info@seattlegreenspacescoalition.org

Co-signers:

Aimee M. Simpson, J.D., Dir. Product Sustainability, PCC Community Markets
John Brosnan, Exec. Director and Josh Morris, Urban Conservation Manager, Seattle Audubon Society
Carrie Ferrence, Executive Director, City Fruit
Em Piro, Executive Director, Sustainable Seattle
Denise Dahn, Director, Seattle Nature Alliance
Steve Zemke, Chair, TreePac
Jack Bautsch, Plant Amnesty
David Boyd, Chair, Groundswell Northwest
Phil Vogelzang & Garrett Esperum, Board Members, Friends of Discovery Park
Willard Brown, Board member, Delridge Neighborhood Development Association
Stu Hennessey, Sustainable West Seattle