

March 2022

Mayor Bruce Harrell  
[Bruce.Harrell@seattle.gov](mailto:Bruce.Harrell@seattle.gov)

Dear Mayor Harrell:

We want to enthusiastically congratulate you on your election. We are from The Last 6,000 Campaign – a volunteer campaign to document Seattle’s remaining large, majestic trees – as well as from numerous other supportive community organizations that have co-signed this letter. We are encouraged by your “Emerald City” Climate Action Plan that includes strengthening tree protections.

We ask that you champion the following:

1. Strengthen **Seattle’s Tree Ordinance**. 70% of Seattle’s trees are on private property. We know we are losing large trees at a rapid rate. The 2016 Seattle Tree Canopy Report stated that we had only 6,338 trees of 30” and greater trunk diameter left in the city. We urge you to support a comprehensive new tree ordinance, without takeaways from what we already have. We suggest beginning with the language created by Seattle’s Urban Forestry Commission. That language was submitted by the Commission to the Mayor’s Office in June 2019 ([UFC Draft Tree Ordinance](#)). We urgently need stronger protections that will help assure our large trees will still be here in twenty years and bringing benefits to every neighborhood.

We are especially concerned about a recent Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections proposal that would eliminate the protection of Seattle’s young trees and take away the ability to appeal the decisions regarding the cutting down of trees. That is why we believe you should begin with the above UFC draft ordinance.

2. Speed up and resource **Seattle’s Tree Inventory** process so that we know how many large trees we currently have, their location, size, health, and species. Right now, we are flying without instruments on our dashboard when it comes to managing our city’s trees. Let us find out how many trees with a trunk diameter of 20 inches and greater there are left in the city.
3. Sponsor an **Urban Forest Design Initiative** to encourage creative higher density housing plans that retain the square footage that trees and their roots need. This initiative should apply to both new multifamily and single-family projects. We do not think that removing all the trees on a lot should always be the first step in a building project.

We support the goal of moving to higher density and growing our affordable and mid-level housing. We do not believe that goal conflicts with retaining the space that large trees need. In fact, these goals go hand in hand.

We know that you value trees. As you wrote in a communication with a voter during your campaign: “Trees are the lungs of the planet.” They contribute to our mental health and physical wellness, absorb rain, reduce flooding and the amount of stormwater that runs off into Puget Sound. Large trees, in

particular, provide exponentially more environmental benefit than a small sapling, such as more oxygen, more cooling, more reduced flooding, and more habitat for birds and wildlife.

Large trees also increase climate community resiliency, protecting us from heat islands which are harmful to people. Last June 2021, in Washington State, 100 people died from extreme temperatures. Protecting and expanding Seattle's urban tree canopy is fundamentally a race and social justice act. In Seattle, you can travel less than 7 miles and experience a 13-degree difference in temperature between an affluent predominantly white community and a predominantly non-white community due to drastically smaller canopy coverage. Large trees in our city quite literally will save lives.

We stand ready to partner with you and your team to successfully solve the city's tree canopy challenges and we support the viewpoints of Seattle's Urban Forestry Commission. We are available for further dialogue with you and/or your staff. We can be reached at [thelast6000@gmail.com](mailto:thelast6000@gmail.com). We look forward to your positive response.

Sincerely,



**Jessica Dixon-Horton**  
Member, the Last 6,000 Steering Committee



**Sandy Shettler**  
Member, the Last 6,000 Steering Committee

**The Last 6,000**  
[www.thelast6000.org](http://www.thelast6000.org)

**EarthCorps**  
[www.earthcorps.org](http://www.earthcorps.org)

**PlantAmnesty**  
[www.plantamnesty.org](http://www.plantamnesty.org)

**Dunn Gardens**  
[www.dunngardens.org](http://www.dunngardens.org)

**Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust**  
[www.mtsgreenway.org](http://www.mtsgreenway.org)

**Friends of Ravenna-Cowen Park**  
[www.friendsofravennacowen.org](http://www.friendsofravennacowen.org)

**Friends of Green Lake**  
[www.friendsofgreenlake.org](http://www.friendsofgreenlake.org)

**The Heron's Nest Outdoor Education**  
[www.theheronsnest.org](http://www.theheronsnest.org)

**Friends of Maple Leaf Park**  
[www.seattleparksfoundation.org](http://www.seattleparksfoundation.org)

**University United Church of Christ**  
[www.universityucc.org](http://www.universityucc.org)

**Historic Seattle**  
[www.historicseattle.org](http://www.historicseattle.org)

**TreePAC**  
[www.treepac.org](http://www.treepac.org)

**Seattle Green Spaces Coalition**  
[www.seattlegreenspaces.org](http://www.seattlegreenspaces.org)

**Heron Habitat Helpers**  
[www.heronhelpers.org](http://www.heronhelpers.org)

**Phinney Ridge Community Council**  
[www.phinneyridgecc.org](http://www.phinneyridgecc.org)

**Don't Clearcut Seattle**  
[www.dontclearcutseattle.org](http://www.dontclearcutseattle.org)

**Friends of Seattle's Urban Forest**  
[www.friends.urbanforests.org](http://www.friends.urbanforests.org)

**Puget Soundkeeper**  
[www.pugetsoundkeeper.org](http://www.pugetsoundkeeper.org)