



October 27, 2024

TO: Kenmore City Council members

RE: Exceptional Tree Ordinance

We are writing to ask that you not modify the Exceptional Tree Ordinance on October 28, as proposed by staff, and instead leave the ordinance as it stands. The existing ordinance was the result of a deliberative process, and it provides a good level of protection for trees in Kenmore. The modifications proposed would significantly weaken the exceptional tree ordinance. We have the following concerns:

- Maintaining our tree canopy is essential for the health of streams and watersheds in Kenmore, as well as keeping our steep slopes stable.
- Retaining trees of all types, especially large trees, is consistent with Kenmore's Climate action goals. Making it easier to cut trees is not. Just because a large tree is non-native, or is native but is not a conifer, does not make it not valuable.
- Residents in all zones deserve access to a robust tree canopy, including large, old trees. Exempting zones along 522 exacerbates environmental justice issues for people who are already living with fewer trees and more concrete.
- The decision-making process to get here has not been transparent to the public. "Unintended consequences" and "community input" are alluded to in the agenda bill, but the specific concerns and who has brought them forward is unclear.
- We are concerned that input from the Master Builders Association and certain land developers may have had undue influence. Input from knowledgeable local residents, who were asked to comment, has been disregarded. There has not been engagement with the local environmental community.

- We can point to specific parcels around Kenmore which are well-forested and/or have significant trees that will see all or most of their trees cut down if you make this change. Keeping trees is much more effective than replanting if you are serious about your climate and environment goals.
- We are dismayed that trees and housing continue to be pitted against one another. There are developers, architects, and others designing buildings and streets with trees in mind right now, illustrating that new development is not incompatible with large trees.
- If variances need to be granted, the City already has the authority to make those decisions on a case-by-case basis.

Sincerely,



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Elizabeth Mooney, President
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