



City of Seattle

Mayor Jenny A. Durkan

November 2, 2020

Honorable Members of the Seattle City Council
Seattle City Hall
600 4th Avenue, 2nd Floor
Seattle, WA 98124

Dear Councilmembers,

This year – both the City Council and our City Departments – have made some of the most significant budget decisions in our City’s history. With the crises of a global pandemic, growing economic need from our residents, small businesses, and the most vulnerable, a civil rights reckoning, and a climate crisis, the needs of our city are significant at a time of so much uncertainty.

Our new revenue forecast gives us some of the first good financial news of 2020. We need to be cautious about spending all of the amounts because COVID-19 may continue to worsen nationwide into the winter. But paired with the Supreme Court ruling on car tabs, we now have the opportunity to focus additional resources to address our shared priorities and to restore key municipal services that had to be reduced as the economy fell into a sharp contraction.

This year is a unique year for our City with such volatility to our City’s budget. Since this forecast comes after my budget proposal and in the midst of your deliberations, I want to share key priority areas where we can restore services and/or focus additional resources. I understand additional areas such as restoration of cuts to SDOT or alternatives to policing may be addressed as part of other budget considerations, but I believe these new resources could be used to address the following priorities:

- **Clean Cities Initiative.** Since the beginning of the pandemic, through a combination of staffing pressure and evaporating volunteer crews, the City has faced significant challenges addressing litter, illegal dumping, and trash remediation. Working with staff from across the City, our City departments have developed a proposal to provide increased trash pick-up, to proactively increase cleaning in parks and open spaces, and to help business districts manage issues of trash accumulation while working to preserve their livelihoods. We now have the resources available to fund this effort. Building on some of the articulated Council priorities, I will be outlining a detailed proposal that would increase litter abatement routes, stand up a rapid response team out of Seattle Parks to address trash in Parks, and make infrastructure improvements in key parks to improve overall cleanliness.
- **Restoring Strategic Investment Fund.** As part of the overall effort to balance the budget and address other key needs, we were forced to use proceeds from the sale of Mercer Mega Block for immediate needs, thus reducing funding that had been dedicated to a Strategic Investment Fund. The Fund was designed to support city-led investment in areas at high risk of displacement or low access to opportunity that offered unique opportunities for community-driven equitable development. I remain committed to this strategy and believe we now have

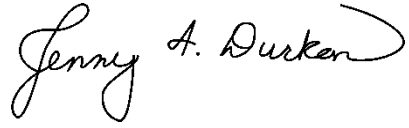
the resources to renew this effort. In addition to the increased General Fund resources, a portion of the newly anticipated REET revenues could be dedicated to strategic investment that support of affordable housing, as such expenditures are currently an allowed use of REET II.

- **Further Expanding Shelter Capacity and Safe Alternatives.** While my budget proposes significant new shelter resources for individuals experiencing homelessness, I believe the City Council can use some of this new revenue to address the critical needs of our unsheltered neighbors, especially increasing shelter as well as considering motel vouchers, flexible funding to give providers options to move people off the street and into safer places, and support to increase the availability of permanent housing solutions.
- **Eliminating Budget-Driven Layoffs.** We also have an opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous work and dedication of City employees by using a portion of the additional funding to eliminate the need for any budgetary-driven layoffs of permanent City employees. One of the most difficult decisions made in developing the 2021 Proposed Budget was to cut funding for a small number filled positions. We now have the resources needed to avoid the elimination of permanent jobs that were cut for financial reasons.
- **Addressing \$14 Million for Community Safety and Capacity Building Investments.** Beyond these four specific priorities, I see an opportunity to dedicate the remaining additional resources to fulfill commitments we have already made and to restore funding for the maintenance and preservation of basic services and city assets. As part of recent actions regarding the 2020 budget, Council approved a \$14 million interfund loan that would have required cuts to the 2021 budget to repay. Fortunately, the revised revenue forecast provides a path to fulfill this funding obligation without further reductions.
- **Key Priorities in Budget Restoration.** Across the budget, we had to make some small reductions that can and should be restored. For example, I support using the additional resources to make whole the funding for immigrant and refugee legal defense services, restore funding to the Office of Sustainability and Environment to help implement local strategies to battle climate change, fund the South Park public safety coordinator, and extend the previous one-time spending in the Office for Civil Rights investments in community-led alternatives to the existing criminal-legal system.
- **District Identified Priorities for Capital Project and Maintenance.** The remaining additional REET revenues could be used to restore capital maintenance funding at the Transportation and Parks Departments. Restoration and maintenance of roads, bridges, bike lanes, sidewalks, parks and playgrounds are not necessarily high-profile items, but they are essential to preserve these important public assets.

The events of the last few months have also brought a sharp focus on the need to invest meaningful resources to ensure that our Black, Indigenous and People of Color Communities (BIPOC) can thrive. My proposed budget provides \$100 million as an initial investment for this specific purpose. The recommendations about how these resources should be invested will be determined via a community-led process from a range of community leaders who collectively bring decades of professional and lived perspectives. I urge the City Council to keep funding whole so that this BIPOC Task Force can be empowered to lead and collaborate with community to make the generational investments needed to start correcting centuries of inequity. The community-led research to be developed through the \$3 million City Council appropriated should be synergistic and will give these efforts critical information on how to focus investments.

I look forward to working with you on how these newly available resources can be directed towards our joint priorities and the City's most pressing needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny A. Durkan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jenny A. Durkan
Mayor of Seattle