

May 4, 2020

Seattle City Council
600 4th Ave
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Support for new progressive revenue

Dear Councilmembers,

We are writing in support of establishing a new source of progressive revenue, including efforts by Councilmembers Morales and Sawant, to support long-term, anti-displacement strategies.

Our communities have been under threat from wide-scale displacement for many years, a result of skyrocketing rents and speculative development. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of community resilience in the face of a public health and economic crisis. Our community organizations are on the frontline of keeping people healthy, safe and secure in their homes. But it will come at an economic cost, and once the lockdown is lifted the threat of being displaced from our businesses, community centers, and homes could be even worse.

SouthCORE, the Race and Social Equity Taskforce, and allies, have long advocated for building resiliency through community ownership of housing, cultural and small business space. While the City has launched several programs, such as the Equitable Development Initiative and the Office of Housing's surplus property efforts, they have not been able to meet the need in our communities. It has become clear that the City needs new revenue to help stabilize our communities with adequate capital funding. Yet, the City also faces its own financial crisis in 2020 and beyond, and tax revenue currently dedicated to community resiliency will diminish.

To make things worse, we anticipate that big financial institutions and speculators will take advantage of the COVID-19 crisis by buying up land and buildings in our neighborhoods that will be devalued by the coming recession. At a time when we should be removing property from the speculative market, we could lose out again, just as in the last recession.

For these reasons, we urge you to adopt a new source of progressive revenue that can provide adequate funding to the EDI and other longer-term, community resiliency programs. Billions will be made by high-tech companies and executives amidst the pandemic crisis, while our communities use everything we have to just survive. By putting in place now a progressive tax, the City will ensure that everyone can rebound and have a place in Seattle for coming decades.

Sincerely,

African Diaspora of Washington State
Africatown Community Land Trust
Al-Noor Islamic Center of Washington
Bethany United Church of Christ

Black Community Impact Alliance
Central Area Collaborative
Cham Refugee Community
Co Lam Pagoda
East African Community Services
Filipino Community of Seattle
Got Green
Horn of Africa Services
Lake City Collective
LGBTQ Allyship
InterIm Community Development Association
Multicultural Community Coalition
Na'ah Illahee Fund
OneAmerica
Puget Sound Sage
Race and Social Equity Taskforce
Rainier Beach Action Coalition
Somali Community Services of Seattle
Somali Health Board