



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Winstead and City Councilmembers

FROM: Jessica Simulcik Smith, City Clerk

DATE: December 1, 2015

RE: Documents received at 11/30/15 Council Meeting

CC: Debbie Tarry, City Manager  
John Norris, Assistant City Manager

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Attached hereto are documents received from the public at your November 30, 2015 City Council Business Meeting.

- 1) November 29, 2015 Seattle Times article "Even in small doses, nature could be good for you", submitted by Elaine Phelps.



## Even in small doses, nature could be good for you

TED S. WARREN / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Andrew O'Connor runs on Snow Lake Trail above Snoqualmie Pass. Studies suggest that 10 minutes of exposure to nature, two to three times per week, produces benefits.**

### *The Associated Press*

ANNAPOLIS, Md — Intuitively, people know nature is good for them, and research backs that up. But what dosage is needed?

Recent studies have explored the duration and frequency of time spent in nature that are necessary to yield health benefits. This research, funded by the TKF Foundation, shows that just 10 minutes of exposure to nature, two to three times per week, produces mental-restoration benefits.

Short nature timeouts can happen in small, urban green spaces or one's backyard. One need not travel beyond the city to visit big parks or wild places.

The research, conducted by MaryCarol Hunter, a professor at

the University of Michigan, and Dr. Marc Berman of the University of Chicago, was recently presented at the American Society of Landscape Architects annual meeting.

The work is part of a larger body of research being supported by the TKF Foundation, which has awarded grants to six projects across the country that integrate the design of urban spaces with research on user benefits. All seek to prove the health benefits that green spaces in urban areas offer through contemplation and restoration, so as to inform and influence decision-makers in city design and planning.

"Over the past 20 years, we've invested in the creation of more than 130 urban green spaces," said Mary Wyatt, executive director of

the TKF Foundation. "Hunter's and Berman's initial results confirm the significance of this work and our observations over the past two decades. Our goal is to freely share the results of their research — along with findings from our other five studies — to help city-dwellers cope with the stresses of city life and build community cohesion."

Hunter's study involved having subjects immerse themselves in nature at least 2½ times a week for a minimum 10 minutes, and answer questions before and after about their mental well-being on a specially created mobile app.

The digital entries were correlated with participants' cortisol levels in saliva, an indicator of stress.

Looking at the data, Hunter

found that just 10 minutes is effective in being in nature to receive its benefits.

Participants reported having significantly less stress, an improved ability to focus, and an increased satisfaction with their mood and energy levels. Also, benefits were greater in residential landscapes or small parks.

In Berman's study, subjects were asked to take a 2.5-mile, 50-minute walk through either a dense, urban environment or an arboretum. Afterward, they were given memory tests to measure their ability to concentrate or focus.

Results showed a noticeable difference in those who had walked through the arboretum; they had a 20 percent improvement in work-

ing memory over the other group. As confirmation, another study using photos of urban or nature scenes rather than walks yielded similar results.

However, there are still many questions to answer — for example, how senses other than sight might influence health benefits. Both Hunter and Berman are working to discover the specific features of nature — such as naturalness, complexity, form, openness, access and safety — that create a sense of well-being and improve one's ability to concentrate.

Hunter's research was published in *Frontiers in Psychology* (Aug. 19, 2015) and Berman's in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* (Sept. 7, 2015).