

ORDER NO. 2021-13

AN ORDER OF THE PORT OF SEATTLE COMMISSION

To direct the Executive Director to develop and execute a memorandum of understanding by July 29, 2022 that establishes a strategic relationship with the Seattle Aquarium, and commits \$5,000,000 over the next five years for the development of the Aquarium’s Ocean Pavilion including a Port-related marine environmental educational exhibit.

**PROPOSED
NOVEMBER 16, 2021**

INTRODUCTION

The Seattle Aquarium (“Aquarium”) and Port of Seattle share values that include environmental stewardship of the marine environment, workforce development and equity. Headquartered on the Seattle waterfront, the Port of Seattle and Seattle Aquarium are in close proximity to the Bell Harbor Convention Center, marina, and cruise ship terminal at Pier 66 which are venues of great public interest and attractions for tourism.

The waterfront is undergoing a major transformation associated with the removal of the Alaska Way viaduct and associated construction of the new waterfront promenade and parks. Significant public investments are being made by local, state, federal and private entities to create an Ocean Pavilion at the Aquarium.

The purpose of the Ocean Pavilion is to educate and inspire international visitors and local communities about the environmental stewardship of the marine ecosystem of the Salish Sea and Pacific Ocean. The Seattle Aquarium currently draws over 850 thousand visitors per year, with various programs to allow the Seattle Public School District, and underserved communities to receive subsidized or free tickets. The new Ocean Pavilion is expected to draw over 1.5 million visitors annually.

This presents a generational opportunity for the Port of Seattle to partner with Seattle Aquarium in the development of the Ocean Pavilion and programming and create a marine-focused exhibit highlighting the Port’s innovative environmental programs and potentially promoting awareness of the Port’s maritime facilities. The new facility may also provide for future youth training and workforce opportunities for participation in the blue economy. The Port’s support of this effort will also assist a major tourist attraction to the region.

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48 **TEXT OF THE ORDER**
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50 The Port of Seattle Commission hereby directs the Executive Director to execute a memorandum
51 of understanding by July 29, 2022, that establishes a strategic relationship with the Seattle
52 Aquarium, and commits port funding of \$5,000,000 over five years for the development of the
53 Aquarium’s “Ocean Pavilion” including design and construction of a marine-focused
54 environmental exhibit that provides local communities and visitors educational opportunities and
55 awareness of the Port of Seattle’s environmental mission and goals for advancing ocean health,
56 the Salish Sea Ecosystem, and the blue economy, including the Port’s maritime operations.
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58 In 2022 the executive director shall commit up to \$100,000 to support the design and development
59 of the Port of Seattle exhibit at the Aquarium, subject to the completion of an agreement with the
60 appropriate party.
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62 **STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE ORDER**
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64 The Port of Seattle has a significant governmental interest in creating a strategic relationship with
65 the Seattle Aquarium. This facility and exhibit will advance public awareness of port-related
66 marine-focused environmental programs and facilities and will serve as an important project to
67 promote and advertise Port properties and facilities. The facility and exhibit provide a platform to
68 highlight the Port’s marine conservation work and will increase the public awareness of the Ports
69 environmental sustainability and maritime innovations in our region. This partnership supports the
70 Century Agenda values and goals of the Port increasing tourism, training, and job creation.
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72 The Port’s operation of this exhibit will include working with the Aquarium to market, update and
73 design the exhibit. The exhibit will highlight elements of the Port of Seattle’s sustainability and
74 ocean conservation work through storytelling and interpretation in the Seattle Aquarium’s Ocean
75 Pavilion, accessible public terrace landscape and rooftop that afford spectacular views of Elliott
76 Bay and Port harbor operations.
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78 The Port partnership with the Seattle Aquarium will develop interpretive opportunities
79 highlighting the Port’s work to conserve the Salish Sea and the waters traversed by ships in the
80 Trans-Pacific and Alaskan trade calling on its terminals. Selected stories would be aligned with
81 both the Aquarium and Port’s missions and conservation priorities. An ad hoc committee will be
82 formed by the Port Commission, to include Port, Aquarium, and external stakeholders to aid in the
83 exhibit development and programming.
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85 The Port’s commitment to this project is in addition to contributions made by other public entities
86 including \$35M from the City of Seattle, \$8M from King County and \$3.4M from the state of
87 Washington. Federal support is also expected to be obtained.
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- **ATTENDANCE, TOURISM AND JOB CREATION**

The Ocean Pavilion, in association with the waterfront redevelopment, will dramatically increase public interest in the waterfront and enhance Aquarium attendance. This will create increased public awareness of the maritime environment while creating family wage jobs and re-energize tourism to our region.

Serving almost 1 million tourists annually: The Aquarium projects attendance will climb from 850,000 to 1.5 million per year with the opening of the Ocean Pavilion. Using historical visitor data, it is estimated that 60 percent of visitors would be tourists, which would result in the new building hosting 750,000+ tourists annually, making the Aquarium a top five Seattle attraction.

Increase in tourism/waterfront visitation: According to a 2019 HR&A value study, overall visitation by residents and tourists to the new waterfront is expected to increase by 20 percent (1.5 million net new visitors annually). The Ocean Pavilion will provide a new connection to Pike Place Market (10 million annual visitors) through its publicly accessible roof and will serve as the lynchpin for the City of Seattle’s new waterfront park. Signage inside and outside the Ocean Pavilion will highlight port facilities such as the rooftop of the Bell Harbor Convention Center where additional explanatory signage may also be installed by the Port informing visitors of Port facilities and additional Aquarium exhibitory.

Job Creation: The estimated one-time economic impact to the overall waterfront is \$1.1 billion with more than \$30 million in tax revenue generated. The Aquarium’s Ocean Pavilion project is underway with early site work and will employ an estimated 1,583 people throughout construction at a critical time as we recover our economy. Inclusion of Port-related exhibitory will identify ways for the public to participate in the blue economy.

Labor, women and minority-owned business and apprenticeship programs: The Aquarium’s Ocean Pavilion will employ an estimated 1,583 people—70 percent will be local union jobs and the project exceeds Seattle’s Community Workforce Agreement goals including women- and minority-owned business hires and apprentice programs. The Port’s ability to potentially partner with job fairs will highlight future employment opportunities.

- **PROMOTING DIVERSITY, CULTURE, CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION:** The Seattle Aquarium aims to be inclusive and welcoming to all and believes its visitors should reflect the diversity of our region, paying particular attention to ensuring access to underserved communities and populations within our region. The expanded Aquarium will gain 35 percent more space and an estimated 75 percent increase in attendance, which will dramatically expand the conservation and ocean health programming that it annually delivers.

Collaboration with Coast Salish and Urban Indigenous Community: Design, interpretation and public art for the Ocean Pavilion is being done in collaboration with local Coast Salish tribes and native communities. The result of this important Indigenous engagement is a direct influence on the building architecture, rooftop landscape and

138 interpretive design, interior guest experience exhibit program and public art. This work
139 includes the hiring of a Muckleshoot Tribal member as part of the landscape design team,
140 ongoing reviews and consulting from the Headwater People Consulting and the commissioning
141 by an all-Indigenous led selection panel of a Lummi glass artist for a public art portion of the
142 project. Members of the Suquamish and Muckleshoot tribes have also been engaged through
143 the development of the pavilion.

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145 **Expanding Conservation Education Programming:** The Aquarium expects to see a
146 dramatic increase in its programming and reach due to increased attendance and revenue.
147 Annually, the Aquarium hosts more than 40,000 students from more than 500 schools, with
148 approximately 60 percent of classrooms receiving scholarships. The Aquarium also engages
149 more than thousands of volunteers who provide more than 100,000 hours of service having
150 community conversations, with a third of those hours committed by youth.

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152 **An Inclusive Aquarium for All:** The Aquarium prioritizes providing inclusive programming
153 like ‘Dream Night’ which provides special events for children and adults with chronic illnesses
154 and/or disabilities, our Open House that features multicultural interpretation and materials
155 available in eight languages, and our Deaf Community Day with sign language interpreters
156 throughout the Aquarium. To make the Aquarium accessible to all, the Aquarium distributes
157 approximately 80,000 free tickets through 350+ regional human services agencies supporting
158 underserved and underrepresented communities annually. Examples of community partners
159 include East African Community Services; Refugee Women’s Alliance; Latino Outdoors;
160 Chinese Information and Service Center; Seattle Indian Health Board, and many other diverse
161 organizations.

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