Thank you Madame Clerk, Representative Tarleton, and thank you my friends for gathering here today to witness this transition of representation.

Many of you are probably wondering why I chose this place to be sworn in to the Seattle City Council. Rest assured that it was not to enjoy Seattle's December weather. I have chosen this place to assume the role of Seattle City Councilmember because I ran for this position to be an advocate for the People of District 7 and I wanted to share with my supporters, my family, and my friends, this special place and their struggle to maintain the community they have painstakingly built here, in the heart of our city.

The 1962 World's Fair rejuvenated Seattle's cultural identity. It gave us the Space Needle, the Monorail, the Key Arena, and, yes, this parking garage. In the spirit of the creativity of that fair our neighbors re-claimed a portion of this garage as community open space, establishing the UpGarden. Call-backs to that era of imagination are all around us. An airstream trailer serves as a toolshed. A hollowed out 1963 Ford Galaxy serves as a planter for corn and pumpkins. History and functionality fuse to create this oasis of green in the concrete jungle.

This garden has grown not just produce but community, literally from the grass roots. 150 gardeners work 93 plots, sending over 1,000 pounds of produce a year to local food banks and host public celebrations of the equinox, New Year's eve, and the 4th of July. The Center School, my alma mater, teaches AP Biology in their own dedicated garden. In October children paint pumpkins for Halloween

But now, as many of you have read in the newspaper, this community faces the prospect of eviction for the sole purpose of creating 100 parking spaces. The choice of a vibrant community dedicated to environmentalism, philanthropy, and education on the one hand; juxtaposed against 100 concrete parking spaces on the other, is really no choice at all.

And that is not just my opinion, it is the opinion of the gardeners and citizens who have braved the weather and turned up in force for their voice to be heard and this garden to be saved.

I met with the UpGardeners in November directly after my election. I pledged them my support, my advocacy, and all the resources at my disposal as a Seattle City Councilmember. Throughout November and December I constantly raised the issue with Mayor Durkan and Deputy Mayor Mike Fong and implored them to seek a solution to save this garden and the community that has sprouted up around it.

And, it is my pleasure to make the official announcement that the UpGarden is here to stay. Deputy Mayor Fong and I discussed the final details of a new lease yesterday. The specifics will be announced in the next few days, but in the meantime I can share that the UpGarden will remain in its current location as long as the Mercer Street Garage remains a structure. The plans to evict this community will be rescinded and a formal announcement will be made later today.

Our parks, our community centers, and our neighborhood gardens are the core of our urban experiment, the fusion of nature and built environment to create a livable, sustainable, and beautiful city. The UpGarden has been saved but we must vigilantly seek to protect and expand other P-Patches throughout this city which are increasingly becoming attractive targets for alternative uses. As long as I am a member of the Seattle City Council I will fight for our public green spaces.

It has been a great honor and privilege to represent my neighbors in court as a prosecutor. I look forward to humbly continuing to serve as your Seattle City Councilmember for District 7. We will not win every fight we suit up for, and I know there will be times when we disagree. But I promise to always assume good intentions and listen to the concerns of my neighbors. Together, we will build a District 7 we can all be proud of.

Thank you all for coming out and sharing this moment with me and please let me know if there is any way I can be your advocate in local government.