



City of Seattle

Mike McGinn, Mayor

Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission

Devon Alisa Abdallah, Ph.D. and Shree R. Dahal, Co-Chairs

DATE: November 12th, 2013
TO: Parks Legacy Advisory Committee
FROM: Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission

Dear Parks Legacy Advisory Committee,

The City of Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission is pleased to see a number of funding initiatives in the Parks Legacy Plan preliminary prioritization that support immigrant and refugee communities and their neighborhoods.

We would like to comment on the following initiatives:

Increasing Ability to Engage Historically Underrepresented Communities – The Commission supports this initiative and recommends increasing funding to hire bilingual “Outreach Specialists” to cover at minimum the top seven primary languages (other in English) spoken by Seattle residents¹: Spanish, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Somali, Tagalog, and Korean.

Community Center Operations - We recommend increasing the proposed funding to create new bilingual “Recreation Attendant” positions to serve the community centers and pools, which are located in or around communities with a high proportion of immigrant and refugees:

1. Delridge Community Center
2. Garfield Community Center
3. High Point Community Center
4. International District/Chinatown Community Center
5. Jefferson Community Center
6. Rainier Beach Community Center
7. Rainier Community Center
8. South Park Community Center
9. Van Asselt Community Center
10. Yesler Community Center
11. Medgar Evers Pool
12. Rainier Beach Pool
13. Southwest Pool

We support the creation of a citywide scholarship fund in partnership with the Associated Recreation Council (ARC), with higher allocation to centers in higher poverty neighborhoods. Poverty tends to hit immigrant and refugees particularly hard due to many challenges they face.

Develop and Operate a New Outdoor Pool in North Rainier Valley or Beacon Hill – The Commission supports this initiative as it will provide invaluable benefits to these communities: increased opportunities for physical activity, drowning prevention, economic revitalization and neighborhood pride. The obesity epidemic in the United States disproportionately afflicts ethnic minorities. Moreover, injury statistics shows that black

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children experience the highest death rates from drowning.ⁱⁱ Building an outdoor pool in North Rainier Valley or Beacon Hill, historically racially diverse areas, will be a big step in supporting racial equity in our city.

Improve Youth/Teen Program delivery – We support this initiative and recommend allocating a portion of the funds to recruit immigrant and refugee youth for internships and youth employment at Parks. Internships are crucial pathways that lead to recruiting a diverse workforce at the City of Seattle.

Expand Day Trips and Opportunities for Older Adults – The Commission supports this initiative and recommends dedicating funds specifically for translation, interpretation and childcare services. Immigrant and refugee elders are particularly vulnerable to isolation and illness. Many Grandparents are the primary childcare providers for their family members and cannot participate in recreation programs if childcare is not provided.

“Get Moving” Opportunity Fund – We support this funding initiative that will increase physical activity opportunities for Seattle residents and foster collaboration with community organizations. We recommend including guidelines to ensure equitable distribution of funds with priority to communities with the highest service gaps.

Customer Service Technology – We support this initiative. We recommend improving technology that would allow collecting and analyzing demographic information of patrons so that Parks can monitor if underrepresented communities are being serviced.

The Immigrant and Refugee Commission appreciates the recognition that immigrants and refugees are an integral part of Seattle’s population, and funding services for these groups is of benefit to all Seattle residents.

Sincerely,



Devon Alisa Abdallah, Co-Chair
Immigrant and Refugee Commission



Shree R. Dahal, Co-Chair
Immigrant and Refugee Commission

cc: Mayor Mike McGinn
Councilmember Sally Bagshaw, Chair of Parks and Neighborhoods Committee
Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation
Barbara Wright, Co-Chair of Parks Legacy Citizens Advisory Committee
Charlie Zaragoza, Co-Chair of Parks Legacy Citizens Advisory Committee

ⁱ City of Seattle Translation and Interpretation Policy. Available from:
[http://www.seattle.gov/rsji/immigrants/docs/Translation and Interpretation Policy.PDF](http://www.seattle.gov/rsji/immigrants/docs/Translation_and_Interpretation_Policy.PDF) Accessed 11/8/13

ⁱⁱ Overview of Childhood Injury Morbidity and Mortality in the U.S. Fact Sheet (2013). Available from:
<http://www.safekids.org/sites/default/files/documents/2013%20Overview.pdf> Accessed 11/8/13