



## City Neighborhood Council

700 Fifth Ave, Suite 1700, PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649

August 10, 2015

Mayor Ed Murray  
PO Box 94749 , Seattle, WA 98124-4749

Seattle City Council  
PO Box 34025, Seattle, WA 98124-4025

### RE: City Neighborhood Council's 2016 City Budget Priorities & Recommendations

Dear Mayor Murray and Seattle City Councilmembers:

The City Neighborhood Council (CNC) is comprised of volunteer representatives from Seattle's thirteen Neighborhood District Councils who are passionate about their communities and devote their time and energy to working with the city on critical issues. One of the best opportunities for public engagement is through Seattle's budget process to jointly develop a document reflecting the people's priorities. The CNC develops a set of priorities and recommendations regarding Seattle's Budget based input from Neighborhood District Councils and the CNC Budget Committee. Our understanding is the anticipated overall growth in General Subfund revenues will not match expenditures resulting in an approximate shortfall of \$16.5 million dollars in 2017. The CNC recognizes the significant amount of work required to produce the final budget and stretching City resources can be challenging. Several priorities have been identified (below) in part with feedback from a prior CNC Community Budget & Priorities Survey which we hope you will consider during your deliberations:

- **Transportation.** Realize an integrated, comprehensive transportation plan designed to connect the public with all modes of transportation in an efficient manner with an emphasis on safety for travel between neighborhoods. Expand transit service to pre-2009 levels and prioritize pedestrian safety improvements using Vision Zero. Continue to engage the public in the implementation of the Bicycle Master Plan. Prioritize Safe Routes to School improvements and maintenance of streets and sidewalks.
  - **Congestion Relief.** A high priority across the city. Continue and expand efforts to utilize the traffic signal network to reduce congestion and enhance safety.
- **Police and Human Services.** Neighbors are extremely concerned that violence and criminal behavior is on the rise. Continue to expand funding and oversight for programs such as (LEAD) Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, (MDT) Mutli-Disciplinary Teams, Hot Spots, Mental Health Treatment and Shelter Options. Increase resources for SPD Patrol Staffing; prioritize Crime Prevention Coordinators.
- **Department of Neighborhoods – (DoN).** Re-prioritize this department, which has taken a disproportionate level of budget cuts over the years and currently operates at an estimated 50% reduction in staffing from prior levels at a time when the need for outreach, engagement and support resources to our communities is at a premium. Changes in leadership at DoN should inspire a review of organizational structure, resource allocation and systems, which could lead to the development of new (or strengthening existing) tools to improve access to funding and other services to the public.
- **Public Engagement.** When Councilmanic Districts become effective in 2016, Neighborhood Service Centers and Neighborhood District Coordinators will become even more critical and should be funded accordingly. These services are relatively inexpensive yet significantly increase civic engagement, community self-help and stewardship as well as to leverage community resources. As part of this administration's overall goal to improve connections with the public, direct City Departments to adopt processes to:
  - Encourage staff to be more responsive and receptive to community requests to foster improved, consistent and meaningful engagement
  - Increase oversight of internal methods to enhance communications with the public

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- **Neighborhood Planning.** The CNC strongly recommends restoring the budget to update neighborhood plans at a grass roots level. These plans should be more extensive than the current round of targeted Action Plans or Urban Design Framework Plans which are limited in geographic scope and public outreach. The CNC encourages funding at a level that provides for updates all plans within the 20 year cycle and allows for creation of new Neighborhood Plans in areas experiencing growth when requested by stakeholders in those areas.
- **Develop / Adopt Strategic Bond and Levy Agenda For Next 10 Years.** Including:
  - A list of prospective, current and tentative plans to replace current levies
  - Publicizing the process for public engagement for development of bond/levy proposals
  - Indication of contingency plans in place to address failure of financial ballot measures
- **Capital Improvement Program.** Increase public input opportunities.
- **Distribution within City Council Districts.** Thoughtful discussions are occurring across all city departments to determine how to align budgeting with new Councilmanic Districts. The CNC supports the use of data analysis and investments in evidence-based best practices to maximize positive outcomes for our City and its residents. Data analysis should identify needs at multiple levels to ensure services are effectively distributed. The CNC would like to see the City develop additional methods to improve public input opportunities and track capital projects by City Council Election and Neighborhood Districts. Tracking projects within CNC Districts in the context of District needs, citing measures of those needs where possible. (Data comparison purposes only, CNC is not endorsing boundary realignments between Neighborhood Districts and City Election Districts.)
- **Participatory Budgeting.** The CNC is aware that Phase One of PB Seattle appears to be moving ahead and is looking forward to playing an active role on the Steering Committee to provide recommendations and oversight. At the July 27 General Meeting, CNC members discussed the possibility of increasing current budget allocation across District lines of up to \$1M per District.
- **Youth Schools and Education.** The CNC recommends a budget allocation of approximately \$100k in the 2035 planning efforts for a dedicated staff person for planning for Public Schools.
- **Quality of Life.** Utilize the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan to invest in infrastructure and champion policies specifically targeting natural resources, public health, and green spaces. Emphasize and support relationships at the local, state, and national levels to prioritize community needs in underserved communities.
- **Affordable Housing.** Seattle urgently needs additional affordable housing as a result of significant population growth and increasing income disparity across the city. Continue to identify and implement additional funding options such as renewal and expansion of the Housing Levy, potentially utilizing Seattle's bonding capacity, preserving existing affordable housing, streamlining regulatory processes and establish stronger protections for vulnerable tenants and homeowners.

Thank you for considering the City Neighborhood Council's comments.

Sincerely,



Laine Ross, Co-Chair  
City Neighborhood Council



Catherine Weatbrook, Co-Chair  
City Neighborhood Council

C: Ben Noble, Director CBO  
Kathy Nyland, Director DoN