



# City Neighborhood Council

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October 25, 2013

Seattle City Council  
P. O. Box 34025  
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

## CNC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 2013-14 BIENNIAL BUDGET

Dear City Councilmember:

City legislation assigns an important role in the budget process to the City Neighborhood Council and the thirteen District Councils that comprise it. CNC sent budget recommendations to you and the Mayor in a June 28, 2013 letter (posted at [seattle.gov/neighborhoodcouncil](http://seattle.gov/neighborhoodcouncil)). In consultation with the District Councils, CNC has reviewed the Mayor's proposed 2013-14 budget and has the following comments.

1. Neighborhood District Coordinators. CNC urges a restoration of NDC positions to the original number of 13. These positions were cut to 9 during periods of austerity, and they should be restored now that new revenues are again available. Doing so would better use new Department of Neighborhoods funds than the Mayor's proposal that DON fund a capital projects coordinator. CNC can support the proposed \$166,371 and 1.5 FTE for this new DON position only if funded by transfers from City Light, Seattle Public Utilities, and SDOT-- departments that need and should pay for this DON help.

2. Neighborhood Matching Fund. While welcoming the Mayor's proposed \$500,000 increase to restore NMF to pre-recession levels, CNC notes that even the restored level would fall considerably short of NMF levels of the 1990s, levels which we urge the City Council to further restore.

3. Civic engagement fairs. Using existing funds in the departments and in the offices of the Mayor and City Council, please enable each year in different parts of the city six or more civic engagement fairs to be sponsored or co-sponsored (if they wish) by one or more District Councils.

4. Webcast board and commission meetings. Almost none of the City's board and commission meetings are being webcast. Open government and civic

### DISTRICT COUNCILS:

- Ballard
- Central
- Delridge Neighborhoods
- Downtown
- East
- Greater Duwamish
- Lake Union
- Magnolia/Queen Anne
- North
- Northeast
- Northwest
- Southeast
- Southwest

engagement will benefit from inexpensive technology that can be managed by board members themselves or by staff who are already in attendance.

5. Public safety. CNC supports the proposed funding of ten new police officer and additional non-commissioned positions. We also call upon the City Council to restore the Crime Prevention Coordinators to at least ten--still considerably less than at their peak in the 1970s. We also ask that the work of these coordinators be better integrated with that of the Office of Emergency Management.

6. Health, human services, housing, and community centers. Homelessness is a regional problem and its solution must involve other cities, King and other counties, and state government. CNC also urges at least a 25 percent increase in late-night hours and teen programs in community centers.

7. Parks and Seattle Center. CNC is concerned that the Mayor's budget proposals do not go far enough to restore sustainable maintenance levels for park and Seattle Center structures, roads, paths, gardens, and ecosystems. Recent cuts in painting, carpentry, metal work, plumbing, electrical repair, weeding, pruning, watering, cleaning and trash pickup place this legacy in jeopardy. Unchecked invasive weeds in parks endanger desired vegetation and spread outside the parks to natural areas as well as to private gardens.

8. Bridges, roads, walkways, bikeways, greenways, and green streets. CNC recommends at least a ten percent increase in SDOT pedestrian and bicycle improvements and in road and bridge maintenance. At the proposed levels of major maintenance, even arterials will continue to deteriorate, while virtually nothing is budgeted to halt the rapid decline of non-arterials (most neighborhood, business, and industrial streets) which are 60 percent of Seattle's lane mileage and at least 40 percent of the road maintenance backlog cost. And to avoid adding to the maintenance burden, the City should reduce avoidable damage by enforcing weight limits and discouraging vehicles that are exempt from these limits.

9. Trees. To restore SDOT's urban forestry program from previous cuts, a 25 percent increase would be reasonable. CNC also urges that SPU lengthen and promote its annual fall free pickup period for garden waste; and limit charges for the dumping of leaves at transfer stations.

10. Public-Private Partnerships. Controversy over private uses of City land and facilities is fanned by different agencies' piecemeal approach and a lack of independent oversight. The Public-Private Partnership Panel that the City Council authorized in the 1990s was well-designed to provide this oversight, and should be revived.

11. Tax Expenditures. Deductions, exemptions, and deferrals free some taxpayers (usually favored businesses) from paying their share. All tax expenditures should be reviewed annually and repealed or reduced if the public interest is not well-served.

12. Video Voters Guide. Seattle Channel and the Ethics and Elections Commission have been producing this guide only in odd numbered years. We appreciate that the Mayor and Commission have taken CNC's recommendation in its 2012 and 2013 letters that this guide be produced every

year, and urge the City Council to agree. As local ballot measures are increasingly common in even numbered years, the Video Voters Guide should be produced every year.

13. Place more City documents on-line. The public and the agencies alike will save time from document requests if more were available on-line--especially easy for documents that are already in digital form. Unfortunately, most ordinances and resolutions adopted prior to the mid-1990s remain inaccessible electronically, as are many opinions of the Ethics and Elections Commission; funds should be provided for placing them on-line.

14. Retention of public records. The City should retain all public records for several years, especially since technology is dramatically reducing the costs. Seattle's deletion of many e-mails and other documents within weeks of when they are created or received is not consistent with open and accountable government.

15. Next generation data center. CNC is not convinced of the Department of Information Technology's need for a new data center at a cost of \$27-39 million. Significant savings seem likely if the City entertained bids from companies like Microsoft and Amazon that operate huge server farms for just this purpose.

Thanks for your consideration of the above recommendations. See CNC's June 28, 2013 letter for background. This letter was authorized at the September 30 CNC meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip Shack". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Philip Shack, Chair  
City Neighborhood Council

cc: Mayor, City Budget Office, Department of Neighborhoods, District Councils