



City Neighborhood Council

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

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DISTRICT COUNCILS:

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

March 18, 2008

Councilmember Sally Clark, Chair
Planning, Land Use, and Neighborhoods Committee
Seattle City Council
P.O. Box 34025
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

Director Stella Chao
Department of Neighborhoods
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1700
P.O. Box 94649
Seattle, WA 98124-4649

RE: NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

Dear Councilmember Clark and Director Chao:

The City Neighborhood Council welcomes the \$100,000 in 2008-09 budget funds that the Mayor and City Council set aside to re-establish a neighborhood leadership training program. CNC discussed this initiative at its Feb. 25 meeting and authorized the following letter.

Background. City Council resolution 31044 includes a statement of legislative intent requiring the Department of Neighborhoods to submit a plan for how it proposes to spend the neighborhood leadership training funds. The resolution set February 15, 2008 as the deadline for when DON was to provide its plan to the City Council, but we understand that the plan is not yet available. We urge DON to see this delay as an opportunity to make full use of input from CNC and the district councils, and we request that the City Council bear our suggestions in mind when it reviews the forthcoming DON plan. .

(1) We urge that DON and the City Council make a particular effort to ensure that the training is of practical value to those who are or will be involved in building community and building neighborhood organizations. Among those who took past trainings offered by the Department of Neighborhoods, there is a feeling that the curricula and teaching were often excessively theoretical, too

lacking substantive examples from the neighborhood level, or lessons useful for all-volunteer organizations. There is also a concern that exclusive focus on “leadership” may deter some able candidates and divert the trainings from practical skills such as assessing neighborhood needs, raising funds and other resources, attracting and motivating volunteers, and other tasks that are so important at the neighborhood level.

(2) We urge that the training program be designed to be sustainable and to make best use of limited and uncertain funds. There is concern about a past lack of continuity in DON’s training programs. Over the years, funds varied considerably, growing and then declining to almost nothing. The program lacked the design for a built-in momentum and was so dependent on City funds, staff, and consultants that when the funds ran out, there was almost nothing left. The same cycle is at risk of repeating itself unless a different design is chosen.

(3) We urge that the program include peer-to-peer training as a way to ensure that the training is practical, cost-effective, and sustainable. Using volunteers to teach other volunteers helps keep the curriculum and examples on a practical level, makes the program funds go furthest, and introduces a self-sustaining momentum for when the funds inevitably decline. The City should do all it can to encourage mutual assistance within and between neighborhoods.

(4) We urge that the training funds not be limited to or focused primarily on the update of neighborhood plans. Training to build community and neighborhood organizations is not needed just in areas with a neighborhood plan that is expected to be updated. Neighborhoods that lack a neighborhood plan may be particularly in need of training opportunities and should not be neglected. Also, it is doubtful that skills needed in updating a neighborhood plan represent the full range of skills most needed for community-building and organization-building.

(5) We urge that the Department of Neighborhoods and the City Council create a role for the thirteen district councils in planning for and overseeing the Neighborhood Leadership Training Program. This would include presentations to the district councils and the City Neighborhood Council, early enough for their input to be considered and used. It would also include an advisory committee that draws members designated by each of the district councils and that is convened early enough to provide a meaningful role in the program’s design. The advisory committee would be continued throughout the program in order to assist in its management, evaluation, and improvement, and would participate in such matters as curricula, speakers, and consultant selection.

Conclusion. CNC and the district councils look forward to working with the City Council and the Department of Neighborhoods in the design and management of the

Neighborhood Leadership Training Program. We recommend the above five steps to help ensure that it is most practical, cost-effective, sustainable, and participatory.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Leman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Christopher K. Leman, Chair
cleman@oo.net (206) 322-5463

cc: Mayor Nickels, City Councilmembers, District Councils