



# 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

June 25, 2008

Mayor Greg Nickels  
City Hall, 600 4th Avenue, 7<sup>th</sup> floor  
PO Box 94749  
Seattle, WA 98124-4749

RE: 2009-10 BUDGET PROPOSALS

Dear Mayor Nickels:

Continuing in the advisory role assigned by City legislation to the City Neighborhood Council and the thirteen District Councils in development of the City budget, and based on consultation with and among the district councils, CNC suggests the following:

Austerity requires better use of existing funds. With revenues declining, a particular effort should be made not to miss those increases that remain justified. Some cuts will be necessary, but should be accompanied by policy and management improvements in every department that produce better results for the money.

Public safety. Real increases are still needed in sworn uniformed police positions. Police and fire efforts will go furthest if the City improves administrative funding to strengthen voluntary block watch and emergency preparedness efforts.

Neighborhood Matching Fund. NMF has not fully recovered from past cuts, and should be moderately increased. It keeps Seattle's neighborhoods livable, and by leveraging private dollars and volunteer hours, brings double value.

Neighborhood Service Centers and District Coordinators. The centers and coordinators empower residents, businesses, and the district councils. Their funds should be retained and, where possible, increased.

Neighborhood planning. Grassroots planning and stewardship groups that wish to, should continue to be able to hire consultants and do outreach under City contract and with City funds. Doing so empowers the community, resulting in plans that are better, more widely supported, and more cost-effective than those done by City employees and City-hired consultants.

Health, human services, housing Recent years' cuts have hurt the most vulnerable. Any further reductions must be considered carefully, and only if softened by consolidations and efficiencies. A stable funding source for senior centers must be found. Subsidized housing and related services should not be unduly concentrated in any particular area of the city.

Community center hours and youth programming. Please restore community center and youth programming to the higher levels that they enjoyed before the cuts of several years ago.

Library. Please continue into the future the recently increased hours and book-buying budget.

Drainage and sewage infrastructure. Dangerous situations facing people in their homes and businesses must be addressed, and with public input. Any consideration of rate increases must be justified by improved results, and presuppose improved efficiencies with current rates.

Sidewalks. The Bridging the Gap transportation levy is not constructing enough sidewalks. More levy funds, and more non-levy funds, must be found, especially for sidewalks on arterial streets and on or near transit corridors.

Streets. Bridging the Gap is scarcely funding the maintenance of non-arterial streets, whose deterioration hurts neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas alike. SDOT told the City Council in 2006 that non-arterials were 42 percent of the maintenance backlog, or \$342 million, and the figures have grown since. As we have done regularly since 2001, CNC asks increased funding for the rebuilding of non-arterial streets.

Roads and bridges will not fully benefit from restoration unless damage is reduced from vehicles that are heavier than the state standard of 20,000 pounds per axle. The only vehicles normally allowed to exceed that limit are solid waste trucks and transit buses. The waste disposal contract should discourage City haulers from using a state exemption that allows their trucks to exceed 20,000 pounds per axle. The City also should work to ensure that new Metro buses do not exceed that weight, and the City should work to be reimbursed for damage from the many buses that do.

Central call center. Responsiveness is a worthy goal. Therefore please don't close off channels by which the public now successfully communicates with departmental staff. It

would not be a step forward to remove the many agency phone numbers that are now listed in the phone book and on the web, or to discourage employees who are most familiar with a situation from responding immediately to calls from the public.

Translation and interpretation services. The City offers translation assistance for a neighborhood organization to send meeting announcements in one or another language other than English, but at the meeting, non-English speakers also need interpretation services (which can be less expensive than written translation services). City funds should be available for communities that request interpreters to assist at their meetings. The City should also collect and provide contact information for interpreters who a neighborhood organization can ask to volunteer or serve on a low-cost basis.

Video access to boards and commissions. Seattle Channel coverage of boards and commissions has declined in recent years. Improved infrastructure would make it easier to broadcast or webcast these meetings. Cameras, microphones, laptops, portable audio mixers, or other equipment are needed for loan to boards and commissions whose staff or volunteers can operate them for webcasts. Electronics are needed to connect the Seattle Channel studio for coverage of meetings held in the 40<sup>th</sup> floor meeting rooms of Municipal Tower and in the Board Room of Parks Department headquarters. Cable franchise fees, not taxes, can fund these improvements.

“Paper Cuts” program. In the laudable effort to reduce paper consumption, outreach efforts have suffered, disadvantaging those who don’t have e-mail or web access. The proper goal is not to eliminate all paper, but to eliminate unnecessary paper in order to continue necessary uses of paper, such as to sustain democracy. Posters and fliers advertising public meetings, and handouts at these meetings, are essential, and should be restored from recent cutbacks.

Conclusion. Thanks for your consideration of the above recommendations. This letter was drafted by CNC’s budget committee, distributed for comment and revision from the district councils, discussed at the May 19 CNC meeting, revised, and then discussed and adopted (without opposition) at the June 23 meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Leman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris Leman, Chair  
City Neighborhood Council  
cleman@oo.net, (206) 322-5463

cc: District Councils  
City Councilmembers