



## City Neighborhood Council

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

October 27, 2014  
Seattle City Council  
PO Box 34025, Seattle, WA 98124-4025

### **RE: City Neighborhood Council's 2015-2016 City Budget Recommendations**

Dear Seattle City Councilmembers:

Seattle neighborhoods connect with City Government through improved channels each day. One of the best opportunities for the public to engage with the city is also through Seattle's budget process to jointly develop a document reflecting the people's priorities. Volunteer representatives from Seattle's Thirteen Neighborhood District Councils comprise the City Neighborhood Council, (CNC), organize a Budget Conference on a biennial basis and provide recommendations on the City budget. The CNC recognizes the significant amount of work required to produce the final budget and that stretching City resources in lean times is an art. At the CNC's October 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Mayor's Proposed Budget was discussed again and several priorities identified which we hope you will consider during your deliberations:

**Department of Neighborhoods – Neighborhood Matching Fund:** The sharp decline in Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF), Large Projects Fund (LPF) application submissions may be related to recent Department led process changes resulting in an increase of under spent funds. The public was ensured these dollars would remain in the LPF program which is mission critical for DoN and CNC/Neighborhood District Councils to foster community building and empowerment. It is unlikely there has been a shift in community need or desire to access LPF funds, therefore the city should preserve those balances and consider an increase in funding to the NMF program, including department staff to support neighborhood outreach to improve public access to those dollars. Updates to LPF applications have been discussed but not implemented and reporting requirements have not been revised, to our knowledge.

In 2014, the Department of Neighborhoods formed a separate, department led NMF Advisory Committee which released final recommendations October 3, 2014. The CNC requested clarification on this Committee's role, whether compatible or competitive, to the existing CNC NMF Oversight Committee's work by reaching out to DoN and the Mayor's office. The CNC recognizes that a significant amount of volunteer time was invested by DoN NMF Committee members to consider various options for this report and that District Councils are still being briefed at the time of this letter. Thus far, several District Councils have expressed concerns regarding a) use of NMF LPF dollars to fund citywide; non-geographically based projects; b) the dismantling of District Council level review/scoring of LPF applications, a cornerstone of the District Council, NMF structure. Both options may also be outside the scope of the mission of the Department, CNC/District Council system and Resolution 27709.

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In the Mayor's budget proposal, approximately \$1.5M is redirected from Neighborhood Match Fund (NMF) to Neighborhood Parks & Street Fund (NPSF) to fund a backlog of up to 70+ community generated NPSF projects. As noted above, the public was promised that under spent NMF LPF dollars would remain intact where neighbors have significant input and oversight and where volunteer match significantly leverages city dollars. The SDOT NPSF process does not provide that same level of review. The CNC recognizes the significant need for NPSF projects to be funded and is concerned this may occur at the expense of NMF Large Projects Fund applications.

**CNC Recommendation:** Retain under spent (unattached) dollars targeted for SDOT NPSF program in the NMF LPF category to honor the promise to the public and empower Seattle neighborhoods from the bottom up. Direct DoN to revert to pre-2013 LPF process review levels and work with CNC/District Councils to jointly review DoN NMF Advisory Committee 2015 proposed changes along with those implemented in 2013, 2014 to further ensure Seattle neighborhoods are heard. DoN and CNC should jointly market the NMF LPF fund.

**NMF LPF Options:** In 2013/2014, options were suggested to DoN to extend those NMF LPF cycles from one to two rounds and consider raising the cap (if possible) to address the sharp decline of application submissions, which could be considered for 2015.

**DoN Staff Resources:** The Department of Neighborhoods plays an extremely vital role as a conduit between the city and the public and has taken a disproportionate amount of cuts compared to other city departments. Neighborhood District Coordinator and NMF Project Manager Teams are vital to the mission of DoN.

**CNC Recommendation:** Re-evaluate deployment of department resources and options to leverage this work. Both teams should be restored to pre-2010 levels.

**City Council Districts:** As the City transitions to a City Council District model, the CNC looks forward to participating in current and future discussions on how neighborhood empowerment and funding opportunities can be further leveraged. The CNC could also help co-facilitate community dialogues with City Council to further explore how the City Budget process may be improved.

**Neighborhood District Council & City Election District Boundaries:** Additionally, from fall 2013 through summer 2014, CNC engaged with District Councils regarding the impacts of a consolidation of Neighborhood District Councils to align with 7 City Election Districts. On January 27, 2014 Alex Pederson, Legislative Aide to CM Burgess and Kathy Nyland of the Mayor's office attended the CNC meeting where a rigorous discussion occurred on this issue. Thoughtful conversations were held at many levels and there was overwhelming community response for the 13 Neighborhood District Council boundaries to remain intact. On April 28, 2014 CM Burgess attended the CNC meeting where this matter was discussed. The option to expand Neighborhood District Councils to 14 has also been floated signaling the need for more resource allocation to the Department of Neighborhoods and District Councils.

**Public Safety:** Neighbors continue to be very concerned by the increase of violence and criminal behavior. Therefore expanded funding and oversight for programs such as (LEAD) Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, (MDT) Multi-Disciplinary Teams, Hot Spots, Mental Health Treatment and Shelter Options should remain a high priority. The CNC supports the formation or reinstatement of the Office of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, the hiring of new police officers and firefighters and asks that Council also increase SPD hire count.

**Human Services:** As you know, approximately 2,300 people go without shelter each night in our city, a 30 percent increase since 2011. The CNC supports the additional funding of \$2.75M over two years for a range of homelessness services and asks that Council find a way to expand funding where possible.

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**Neighborhood Planning / Design Review:** The CNC supports the Mayor's intent to fund a comprehensive look at the Design Review Program and suggest additional funding, as moving staff resources will impact existing work the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) currently struggles to complete. Continue to fund DPD for review and updating of Neighborhood Plans written under the existing Comprehensive Plan. Virtually one third of the existing plans are not in position for even a targeted review, four years past the midway point. Funding should also be provided to prepare for community engagement and new efforts to create or update new neighborhood level strategies when the Update is enacted. Finally, budgeting new positions within DPD for permit conditions enforcement, specifically tree protection, tree preservation and storm water pollution prevention measures. In almost all cases, enforcement of these conditions requires repeated complaints and when an inspector is finally dispatched, the damage has been done.

**Parks:** The CNC will track the results of the Seattle Park District implementation which includes investments in new park facilities, major maintenance of existing park assets and critical resources for enhancing services within the existing park network, such as programming and public safety efforts.

**Transportation:** – the Mayor's Transportation budget prioritizes needed improvements in 2015, yet does not include a reference to extend the Bridging the Gap levy in 2016, which could also help with infrastructure needs. The passage of a Transportation Benefit District measure this November could result in additional capital expenditures, for example, extending the C line to South Lake Union. The Mayor's budget proposal identifies specific expenditures up front along with generic categories without fully clarifying how those expenditures match the changes in generic categories. Overall the 2015 generic increases for neighborhood improvements (\$ 3 million), street repair (\$2 million), sidewalks (\$8 million), and intelligent transportation systems (\$2 million) are very welcome. We noted no increase in bicycle and trail funding, despite the particular expenditures that were cited. Funding a new SDOT transit division is a welcome development, given insufficient Metro funding and new streetcar plans.

**Revenues:** The CNC recognizes there is far greater need for city services and programs than revenues may exist and that ballot initiatives pending at the time of this letter would raise new revenues. CNC asks that City Council continue to explore a broad array of funding options to provide much needed services to the public.

Thank you for considering these recommendations.

Sincerely,



Laine Ross  
CNC Co-Chair



Alexis Gallegos  
CNC Co-Chair

cc: Mayor Ed Murray, Bernie Matsuno, Department of Neighborhoods.

**This letter was authorized at the October 27, 2014 CNC meeting**