

*To the District Councils and others: Each fall, based on input from the district councils, the City Neighborhood Council sends to the Mayor and City Council a letter commenting on the budget that the Mayor proposed in late September (this year, it was Sept. 24). As the City Council will make its final budget decisions in early November, it is essential for CNC's letter to be approved at its Oct. 29 meeting and sent soon thereafter. Based largely on a July 11 budget letter to the Mayor and city Council that CNC adopted without opposition, the following draft is submitted by CNC's Budget Committee for consideration by the District Councils and CNC. Revision suggestions and comments are welcome, to CNC chair Chas Redmond, credmond@mac.com; and to CNC budget committee chair Chris Leman, cleman@oo.net (206) 322-5463. District Councils are also urged to send their own budget letters to the City Council, especially on district-specific recommendations that cannot be included in the citywide CNC letter.*

## **CITY NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL**

October xx, 2012 [DRAFT FOR REVISION AND POSSIBLE ADOPTION ON OCT. 29]

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 July 11, 2012 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 (see the July 11 letter for background).

1. Neighborhood District Coordinators. CNC urges a restoration of 13 NDC positions from past years' disproportionate cuts to 9, and that all authorized positions be filled. Amidst austerity, these coordinators are more needed than ever to leverage scarce volunteer and City resources.
2. Neighborhood Matching Fund. CNC appreciates the Mayor's proposed small increases, but urges more. NMF is hurting from past years' cuts.
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 of board and commission meetings. Almost none of the City's boards and commissions are webcast. Open government and civic 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. We support the Mayor's proposal to fund ten new police officer positions and additional non-commissioned positions. Amidst these increases, please restore funding for up to seven again of the current four crime prevention coordinators, who leverage volunteers to affordably extend officers' effectiveness. We also request that SPD make more information available on its

web site about its precinct advisory councils--how they are appointed, their procedures, when they meet, etc.

6. Health, human services, housing, libraries, and community centers. We support the Mayor's restoration from past cuts, such as to extend late-night hours and teen programs in community centers, extend library hours, and end the library August furlough closure.

7. Parks and Seattle Center. We are 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, pruning, watering, cleaning and trash pickup place this legacy in jeopardy.

8. Bridges, roads, walkways, bikeways, greenways, and green streets. We support the Mayor's proposed increase in SDOT maintenance (and hope that some will restore funding for stairways that was cut last year). We are concerned that nothing is budgeted for major maintenance 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. We urge that funding from the Appearance and Pedestrian Environment program for business districts not be restricted to those with parking meters. We request that the City be proactive in reducing damage from vehicles that exceed weight limits either illegally or because laws exempt them from these limits.

9. Trees. Despite a small proposed increase, SDOT's urban forestry program hasn't recovered from previous years' cuts. Also, we urge that SPU not charge subscribers for removing leaves, and not charge for the dumping of leaves at transfer stations. Landowners are removing mature trees because of the cost of disposing of leaves.

10. Outreach and involvement. CNC appreciates response to our past concerns over overuse of contracting out for outreach and involvement by SDOT, SPU, and City Light. By now allowing them to have more employee positions for outreach and involvement, the Mayor and Council have saved money and increased effectiveness. But we are concerned that these departments are making too little use of Department of Neighborhoods staff, who have unique outreach and involvement skills. There will be mutual benefits if SDOT, SPU, and City Light are required to spend some outreach and involvement dollars by reimbursing DON staff.

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

12. Tax Expenditures. Just as at the federal and state levels, taxpayers pay more as Seattle foregoes millions in potential revenue by waiving or reducing taxes for favored businesses, as with the Multifamily Tax Exemption that a recent Auditor report found wanting. CNC suggests that all tax expenditures be reviewed annually, and if the public interest is not well-served, be repealed or reduced.

13. Video Voters Guide. Seattle Channel and the Ethics and Elections Commission are producing this guide only in odd numbered years. As local ballot measures are increasingly common in even numbered years, the Video Voters Guide should be produced every year, at least for local ballot measures.

14. On-line availability of City documents. Most ordinances and resolutions adopted prior to the mid 1990s remain inaccessible electronically. Funding should be provided to the City Clerk to digitize these documents and place them on the web site in a searchable form. And unlike the Office of the Hearing Examiner, the Ethics and Elections Commission has not yet placed on-line most of its opinions; it should be provided funds for this purpose.

15. Retention of public records. With technology improvements dramatically reducing the cost of data storage, the City can afford to retain all public records for at least a year (Pierce County retains all documents for six years, the statute of limitations for felonies). Seattle's current deletion of e-mails and other documents within weeks of when they are created or received is not consistent with open or accountable government.

16. Prompt publication of final budget. Agencies and the public cannot effectively track spending when the final budget as approved by the City Council is not printed until well into February of the fiscal year. Additional funds for earlier publication should be provided to the City Budget Office, which does remarkable work with little staff.

Thanks for your consideration of the above recommendations. A draft of this letter was distributed to the District Councils for comment and revision, and was discussed, revised, and approved at the October 29 CNC meeting.

Sincerely,

Chair  
City Neighborhood Council

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