

Seattle Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee

July 21, 2009

The Honorable Greg Nickels
Mayor
City of Seattle
PO Box 94749
Seattle, WA 98124-4749

The Honorable Sally Clark
Chair, Planning, Land Use and Neighborhood Committee
Seattle City Council
PO Box 34025
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

Re: Funding for the neighborhood planning process in the next biennium

We are writing to express the Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee's (NPAC) concerns regarding upcoming funding levels for Seattle's neighborhood plan update/status report process. NPAC was formed to provide the Mayor and the City Council with advice on how best to execute the review and revision of the ten year-old adopted neighborhood plans. As citizen volunteers serving on NPAC, we are dedicated to keeping Seattle's neighborhood plans alive and current.

We have worked closely with the dedicated staff at the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) and the Department of Neighborhoods (DON). Recently, along with the Seattle Planning Commission, NPAC co-hosted a series of sector open house meetings designed to stimulate a neighborhood-based conversation about the status of the neighborhood plans. We engaged in a facilitated conversation with neighborhood residents and stakeholders, asking them to think seriously about how neighborhood plans are shaping their communities, what is working, what is not, what positive changes have occurred and what is still to be accomplished. Over the next several months, we will continue these neighborhood-based conversations. As we and the City continue community outreach efforts, public expectations regarding continued support for updating the 10 year-old neighborhood plans will rise.

From our experience so far—and the experience of the many people involved in neighborhood planning over the last decade—we are convinced that this round of neighborhood planning deserves funding commensurate with the expectations created by the current neighborhood plan update and status report process. Please note that ordinance 122799 states: “Whereas, while City resources are limited, the City Council has identified funding for neighborhood planning updates as one of the Council's top five priorities for the 2009–10 budget ... ”

Public support for planning-based initiatives underscores the importance of continued funding for neighborhood planning. Without question, successful funding for initiatives and levies for parks, transportation, libraries and fire protection is directly linked to public support for neighborhood planning. Without robust, widely supported planning, the levies would not have been so widely supported. Likewise, the key to public acceptance of the neighborhood plans was the public validation process.

Seattle Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee

The Honorable Greg Nickels
The Honorable Sally Clark
July 21, 2009

While we realize the City faces enormous budget challenges in the coming years, we respectfully request that neighborhood planning remain a long-term priority. Lack of adequate funding in the coming biennium will jeopardize the revision, updating and public validation of neighborhood plans. This will create impacts felt for many years. The City, through NPAC and the update and status report process, is laying the groundwork for improvements in our urban villages that will assure Seattle's economic success in the 21st century. Public acceptance of viable neighborhood plans and the means to fund implementation of those plans is essential to the fulfillment of our urban village goals.

Added to this, the City must not squander the goodwill and work accomplished by NPAC and the Planning Commission. Many dedicated volunteers and City staff have spent countless hours working on these plans, updates and status reports. If the City walks away now, it will squander this hard work and goodwill, thereby feeding another decade of distrust by neighborhood stakeholders. Failure to adequately fund the current neighborhood planning process will support claims that the process is a sham, wasting the time of the neighborhood stakeholders and imposing unilateral requirements on their communities.

We hope that in this time of budgetary constraints, you will be able to increase funding for the neighborhood planning process that we are dedicated to moving forward.

Sincerely,

Josh Brower
NPAC Co-Chair

Irene Wall
NPAC Co-Chair

Cc: Diana Sugimura, DPD
Stella Chao, DON