



**City of Seattle**  
Edward B. Murray, Mayor  
**Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**  
Kathy Nyland, Director

# MEMORANDUM

To: Councilmember Tim Burgess,  
Chair of Affordable Housing, Neighborhoods, and Finance Committee

Councilmember Lisa Herbold,  
Affordable Housing, Neighborhoods, and Finance Committee

Councilmember Rob Johnson,  
Affordable Housing, Neighborhoods, and Finance Committee

From: Kathy Nyland, Director of Department of Neighborhoods  
Tom Van Bronkhorst, Department of Neighborhoods

Date: July 15, 2016

Subject: Final Response to Council SLI 18-2-A-1 (DON programs and Council Districts)

Statement of Legislative Intent 18-2-A-1, adopted with the 2016 Adopted Budget, required the Department of Neighborhoods to develop a plan to reorient its programs around the new City Council district structure with a primary focus on the Neighborhood District Coordinator (NDC) program and a goal for more equitable community engagement.

This report is intended to provide Council and staff information regarding the department's progress to date. This final report to the City Council elaborates on issues identified in the preliminary report (submitted to Council on May 3, 2016) and outlines proposed recommendations to improve and expand inclusive outreach and engagement, as well as the creation of more equitable systems that are more reflective of, and more accessible to, communities throughout the City of Seattle. These issues include:

- **A deeper understanding of how we are allocating resources, who is benefitting and where gaps in service may exist;**
- **Defining the relationship between District Councils, Neighborhood District Coordinators and the City;**
- **Review and update of enacting Resolution 27709 for the District Council system, including an update of the NDC job description; and**
- **Review of other jurisdictions' approaches to outreach and engagement.**

This report also includes an overview of several of the department's programs and well as background and history, and feedback we've received. While numerous issues have been identified, we have a few known entities at this time which we are recommending. One example is the need to create a new, updated Resolution. Additional recommendation will come forth in the coming months after a robust outreach and engagement process is conducted.

We look forward to working with Council to ensure that all of Seattle's residents have the opportunity to engage and be included as we design more equitable systems.



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**FROM:** Kathy Nyland, Director of Department of Neighborhoods  
Tom Van Bronkhorst, Department of Neighborhoods

**RE:** Statement of Legislative Intent 18-2-A-1 (DON programs and City Council districts)

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As part of the 2016 Adopted Budget, City Council requested the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) develop a plan to reorient its programs around the new City Council district structure with a primary focus on the Neighborhood District Coordinator (NDC) program and a goal for more equitable community engagement.

This final report to the City Council elaborates on issues identified in the preliminary report (submitted to Council on May 3, 2016) and outlines proposed recommendations to improve and expand inclusive outreach and engagement, as well as the creation of more equitable systems that are more reflective of, and more accessible to, communities throughout the City of Seattle. These issues include:

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DON strives to strengthen Seattle by engaging all communities. We do this by fostering community partnerships, cultivating emerging leadership, and facilitating community inclusiveness. We are a department known for housing many programs, but we are about people. Outreach and engagement is the core of what we do and equity and transparency are our guiding principles.

The Mayor has directed DON, and this SLI has reiterated that ask, to rethink our approach and change the way the City of Seattle does outreach and engagement. Our focus on strategies and approaches will:

- Respect community members’ time;
- Build trust;
- Strengthen and nurture relationships;
- Create open and transparent processes; and
- Manage expectations.

In response to Mayor Murray’s recent Executive Order 21016-06, directing DON to lead a citywide effort resulting in equitable outreach and engagement practices, we are aligning our programs and strategic initiatives to develop authentic partnerships among community members and stakeholders, to better affect policy change and capital investments in communities throughout the city. DON believes successfully engaging the community in the process increases likelihood of public support and better outcomes. This belief is behind each of the recommendations included in this report.

Outreach and engagement, or community involvement, needs to be intentional, deliberate, and inclusive. DON is actively working to create processes that involve and build relationships with people, including those who may have been left out of decision-making in the past. This requires an ongoing commitment to improve community involvement practices that address accessibility, and equity.

**Background:**

Seattle is a city known for its neighborhoods. We have a long history of engagement through a system of recognition and support for neighborhood and business associations, including our District Council system that was created nearly 30 years ago. We have an opportunity before us to rethink the system, clarify and course correct on many lingering issues, and reexamine its mission and purpose. Seattle is not alone in this thinking. Cities across the country are currently evaluating and updating their community engagement programs in an effort to be more inclusive.

City	Last Reviewed	Public	Non-Profit	City \$	Multi-Layered	One Stop	Registry
Austin		X				X	
Las Vegas				X			X
Los Angeles		X		X			X
Nashville					X		X
Portland, OR	2016	X	X	X	X		
Salt Lake City	2014		X	X	X		X
San Francisco	2006	X	X	X	X	X	
Seattle	1989	X		X			
St. Paul	2016		X	X	X		

*Left: City by city highlights of outreach and engagement systems; many have been updated, are undergoing review or will be reviewed next year.*

Community involvement must be improved to achieve equity. We need to expand our networks and connections, variety of approaches, and the depth of engagement with communities. We have valuable partners in our Community Councils and District Councils currently at the proverbial table. However, barriers exist that prevent some communities from sitting at that table and other communities who don't even know there is a table. As a result, we risk muting the voices of too many, while overemphasizing the voices of too few.

DON has focused its attention over the last six months on equity so all of Seattle's voices can be heard, evaluating what we do and how we do it, taking the initiative to work toward correcting disparities and inequities. A focus on equity in any community engagement process is essential to improve outcomes for all communities, especially under-represented and under-served communities.

We know there is no one tool that provides the answer. What works for one community may not work for another. Inclusivity relies on many approaches. DON is working to expand choices and opportunities for all community members, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of those who face barriers to participation.

#### Key Objectives:

- To create well-designed, relevant, responsive and culturally-relevant public involvement plans.
- To build community capacity for meaningful participation, and authentic outreach and engagement.
- To provide a wide range of opportunities for obtaining information and involvement in decision-making processes.
- To achieve greater equity with meaningful involvement of under-served and under-represented communities.
- To be effective and efficient through the wise use and management of all resources, including community's time.

If we want a system, or systems, that are centered on equity and accessibility, we need to develop and implement approaches that help us achieve our desired outcome. The following issues and considerations are intrinsically tied to one another, embrace best practices, and create a system that is as unique, innovative and creative as the people who call Seattle home.

#### Issues and Considerations:

##### **Resolution 27709:**

The 1987 resolution essentially:

- Created the **Office (now Department) of Neighborhoods**
- Developed the **District Council (DC) system** and created the **13 district boundaries**
  - The DC system was created by establishing a Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program. The intent was to "provide a forum for consideration of common concerns including physical planning, budget allocations and service delivery and for sharing of ideas for solutions to common problems."

- Each DC is comprised of representatives from community councils, nonprofit organizations, and business districts.
- The boundaries, by which we operate today, were drawn to correspond to community needs and make addressing those needs easier and more efficient.
- Established the **City Neighborhood Council (CNC)**.
  - Subsequent resolutions refined and altered the initial resolution where the CNC is now defined as a “citizen-led” advisory group comprised of members from each of the City’s 13 District Councils.

Seattle has changed much since 1987 but the DC system hasn’t. Below are some ways the resolution has not kept up to date:

- The Office of Neighborhoods, now a Department, does not have a Neighborhood Planning and Assistance program (In fact planning falls mainly within the Office of Planning and Community Development).
- DON’s current lines of business do not include mediation services for land use disputes, formulation of procedures for budget and block grant reviews, nor are we heavily involved in the updating of the Comprehensive Plan.
- The Neighborhood Matching Fund does not receive block grants funds nor do we ensure that at least \$750,000 be allocated to low-income neighborhoods.
- Budget information is not broken down at the neighborhood-level and opportunities for neighborhood involvement in the city budget process are not exclusive to the City Neighborhood Council.
- The Department of Community Development, Office of Long Range Planning, Department of Construction and Land Use, and the Office of Management and Budget have either been reorganized into new offices and departments or eliminated.
- There isn’t an Interdepartmental Neighborhood Coordinating Committee nor is there an official, centralized community organizational mailing list.

Because much of the resolution is outdated or irrelevant, an update is needed. This is an opportunity to go back to basics, with a focus on the good intentions of the resolution, such as:

- Create partnership between the city and its neighborhoods in order to provide tools and resources which reflect needs and values;
- Strengthen and coordinate City department responses to problems and requests for help;
- To foster cooperation and consensus among diverse interests;
- To facilitate communication between neighborhoods regarding common concerns.

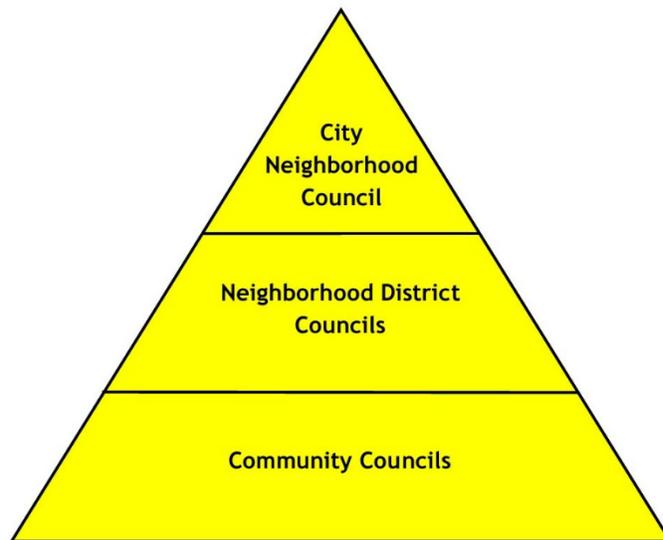
We have an opportunity to rethink the system, clarify and course correct on many lingering issues (i.e., the definition between neighborhoods and communities), re-examine mission and purpose, and create systems that are innovative, accessible, equitable, and empowering to all.

### **Neighborhood District Councils:**

The City is currently divided into 13 districts. Each district has a District Council comprised of representatives from community councils, nonprofit organizations, and business districts.

We have heard from residents active in the system that “District Councils work for us.” The current system does work, but only for people who can access and participate within it. When you consider the

diversity of Seattle, District Councils represent a valid, yet narrow, niche, however they don't work for everyone because of the existing barriers to participation. One barrier to participation for many Seattleites is the structure itself and the amount of time that is required to participate. Many on the CNC also sit on their District Council and many of those volunteers are also active participants on their neighborhood organization. This can easily add up to 10 hours of volunteer time each month. What this means is that many of those who are active in this system can be, because they have the time and ability to do so.



*Under the District Council System community council members select members to represent them at the District Council and City Neighborhood Council. Representatives are committed volunteers, contributing significant time in order to participate in this process. The structure of the system requires hours of dedication which is an obstacle for many.*

Every community group, including District Councils, should welcome new and emerging community groups and organizations into their membership. This could prove challenging as many of our existing systems and programs largely define "community" as being primarily geographic in nature, leaving out those who build and experience community around non-geographic concepts, like language, ethnicity, religious affiliation, or issue-based interests. For example, our District Council system plays an official role in ranking the Neighborhood Matching Fund projects. Applicants for the Large Project Fund must be neighborhood-based: projects that are community or issue based are ineligible, and thus excluded from the process.

The conversation about examining District Councils is not new. In 2009, the City Auditor was asked to review the DC system and issued a report "Seattle District Council System Needs Renewal." Significant findings were made as well as a number of recommendations were presented, though few were pursued or implemented. Some of those recommendations include:

- Clarify the City's objectives for the district council/City Neighborhood Council system: is the emphasis on information or policy?
- Avoid characterizing the district councils and City Neighborhood Council as representative bodies.
- Clarify the City's role in district council governance.
- The City should clarify the level of staff support it will provide to district councils, the City Neighborhood Council, and other groups.

Executive Order 2016-06, signed by Mayor Murray, reaffirms the City's commitment to implementing inclusive and equitable outreach and engagement practices that serve all people in Seattle by initiating the creation of a new public involvement framework. This new initiative will help us reconcile many of these lingering issues, including the differentiation between neighborhoods and communities, to provide clarity about the city's objectives and to create a system of engagement that truly meets its purpose as far as creating partnerships with and between communities throughout the City of Seattle.

### **Neighborhood District Coordinators:**

Neighborhood District Coordinators (NDCs), serve as a community liaison and resource to their assigned sectors: the three sectors being south, central and north. Originally these positions were housed in the Department of Human Services. When the Office of Neighborhoods was created, these positions were transferred to empower and help guide neighbors through the Neighborhood Planning process in the late 1980s. They were also designated to staff the District Councils via Resolution 27709. The traditional neighborhood process was completed in the late 1990s and in subsequent years, community-based planning has been led by the Department of Planning and Development, now the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD), in conjunction with some staffing from DON.

As mentioned earlier, a primary responsibility called out in Resolution 27709 and in the job description of the NDCs includes the support of District Councils, as well responding to community requests and complaints about a variety of problems by coordinating with appropriate City departments. The role of NDCs to date has been that of advocate, mentor, facilitator, and administrator for neighborhood groups, including the District Councils. NDCs have over time developed relationships with neighborhood advocates and it is these relationships that some feel are key to bridging the communication and trust divide between neighborhoods and City government.

Though slight changes to the NDC program have been made over the years, including modification as a result of budget cuts, the program's role and responsibilities have not been formally updated since 2001. These are jobs with a unique classification, meaning these positions are exclusive to DON. Because of the uniqueness of this role, there is a subjective nature to the program and the eight NDCs interpret their responsibilities differently. Some view themselves as advocates while others describe their roles as advisor. Some are interested in developing policy while others want to promote programs. As some community members suggest, "more consistency is needed between NDCs and the services they provide." Some have expressed that "what a community gets from an NDC interaction is based on an individual's personality and their priorities."

With so many moving parts, the separation from District Councils and the CNC, and the creation of OPCD, we have an opportunity to review and reflect on a re-envisioned role for NDCs. This is actually an ongoing conversation that has spanned several years. The NDCs initiated a similar exercise in 2012, updating their job descriptions based on budget impacts, but this was an informal exercise as a Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ) was not submitted.

In 2015, NDCs were again engaged in conversations about their jobs and their roles. In October, NDCs submitted a white paper titled "Planning for the NDC Future" detailing their thoughts on the changing role of the NDC position. In 2016, the department began a process to respond to the Council's Statement of Legislative Intent. Staff met with all of the NDCs to ask for feedback and comment specifically regarding the relationship between the NDCs and District Councils as well as the possibility of updating the enabling resolution. These conversations took place in NDC staff meetings, one-on-one and

with each of the NDC Teams. In addition, between January and April of 2016 staff made presentations at District Council meetings regarding the SLI response and potential changes including the updating of the enabling resolution. NDCs were present at each of these meetings.

If this conversation continues and we reevaluate the positions, the major decision points are the balance between being geography based (current) and skill and needs-based. Because these positions are represented by Local 17, labor would need to be brought in and any proposed changes would trigger bargaining.

Possible roles and responsibilities:

- **Sector Managers:** Position(s) would work closely with OPCD, ensuring coordination and consistency between community development and community engagement. Focus would be on implementation and service delivery. This would be both a skills based and geography based position calling for project management and Inter-Departmental Team experience.
- **Capital Projects Manager:** As outreach and engagement becomes more coordinated, more capacity is directed towards capital projects, especially SDOT. This also would be a skill and geography based position calling for project management, outreach and Inter-Departmental Team experience.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** This position serves as a resource matchmaker, connecting departments programs with communities. Examples include neighborhood clean-ups, block watches, and FIFI walks. A skills based position calling for project management experience.
- **Community Relations/Community Capacity Builder:** Focus on organizing and connecting communities. Casework. On the ground, visible point of contact. Sector focused.
- **Community Involvement Commission:** Staff support like all other city sanctioned commissions.
- **Public Involvement Plan Specialist:** Intake of outreach and engagement support requests and overall tracking of projects. DON's own Air Traffic Controller.
- **Strategic Initiatives:** Provide support to inform and organize communities. Sector focused.

#### Next Steps:

- Beginning in August, DON will conduct outreach and engagement to solicit input on community needs and wants that will help inform the development of a more equitable community engagement structure. This will be complemented by the substantial amount of information that has been collected over the years.
- By August 15, 2016, all city departments will begin working with DON to develop community involvement plans that make information and opportunities for participation more equitable, inclusive and accessible to the public.
- Effective immediately, the Director of DON will reallocate staff resources within the department to (a) prioritize the application of the equitable community outreach and engagement principles outlined in Executive Order 2016-06 and (b) enable the department to effectively provide ongoing consulting services and advice to City departments developing new community outreach and engagement plans and strategies.
- On or before September 26, 2016, DON, Seattle Office for Civil Rights and City Budget Office will develop a proposed City Council resolution with mayoral concurrence that memorializes the community outreach and engagement principles outlined in Executive Order 2016-06. Upon passage by the City Council, the resolution will supersede Resolution 27709 and other, previous,

related resolutions, terminating the City's official ties to District Councils and the City Neighborhood Council.

- On or before September 26, 2016, DON will prepare an ordinance articulating a new citywide framework for community engagement, including the creation of a Seattle Community Involvement Commission. Details of this Commission will be called out in this ordinance including the breakdown of membership appointments from the Mayor and Council as well as any At-Large positions. The ordinance will also amend Chapter 3.35 (Department of Neighborhoods) of the Seattle Municipal Code to be consistent with the resolution prepared to supersede Resolution 27709.
- Effective immediately, DON will work with Seattle Information Technology to explore, identify and develop an array of tools that broaden public access points for digital engagement. A plan outlining the framework will be completed by March 1, 2017.