



To: Mike O'Brien, Chair of Neighborhoods Committee

And: All Seattle City Council Members: Richard Conlin, Jean Godden, Sally Clark, Sally Bagshaw, Tom Rasmussen, Bruce Harrell, Tim Burgess, Nick Licata, Mayor Mike McGinn, Stella Chao, Department of Neighborhoods; Karen Gordon, Landmarks Board; Christa Dumpys, Coordinator Queen Anne/ Magnolia Neighborhood Center; Tom Tanner, District Council Chair Magnolia/Queen Anne; Eugenia Woo, Historic Seattle; Joe Follansbee, AKCHO

Re: Disproportionate Budget Cuts to Department of Neighborhoods and Landmark Preservation Board

Date: October 23, 2010

From: Magnolia Historical Society, Monica Wooton, President

Thanks for your visit to the Magnolia/Queen Anne District Council meeting this past month. I was clearly disappointed, however, in your ability to discuss articulately the disproportionate cuts to the Department of Neighborhoods. **I hope you will see your way clear to be able to lead the entire council through your Department of Neighborhoods Committee work to minimize cuts. These are dollars that bring with them matching dollars, services, in-kind services from the community and thousands of volunteer hours/efforts on behalf of citizen groups in communicating with Council, the Mayor and The Department of Neighborhoods. This is a much, much more expensive cut than is reflected in mere dollar numbers as a budget line item!**

I was also disappointed you had no position or thoughts of how you would/could keep the District Councils under way regardless of any budget cuts. We agree wholeheartedly with the Queen Anne/Magnolia District Council's letter:

“The District Councils (DC) are critical parts of the Department of Neighborhoods’ structure. The District Councils, which have existed even longer than DON, provide a conduit for information and ideas between the city and the neighborhoods. It makes city government aware of citizen concerns and informs citizens of the city’s plans and events. A good example is emergency planning in which the impetus and much of the work is done by volunteers in neighborhoods working with the city and their DC. As a result Seattle is much better prepared for disasters.

The District Councils would be much less effective without the guidance and services provided by the District Coordinators. DON’s plans to close six Neighborhood Service Centers and eliminate seven of the Coordinators will impair the Councils’ work. The Coordinators spend hours in helping plan meetings, implement agendas, and attending community events. They are the first point of contact for community members fielding questions and complaints about city services and in helping people get involved in their community. The Centers being closed serve approximately 150,000 people, most in north central Seattle. The Queen Anne - Magnolia Neighborhood Service Center has 25

community meetings each month and two co-locates at the facility. While the Centers are not as critical as the Coordinators, they are vital to the communities that they serve. Combining several Service Centers, perhaps those for South Lake Union/Cascade and Magnolia, Queen Anne into a combined space at Seattle Center seems a viable alternative to complete closure.”

And, **we are also very concerned that the cuts to the Landmarks Preservation Board** (also disproportionate in relation to other budget cuts) will greatly diminish the ability to protect historical properties. We agree with other groups who are making these important points on this matter:

“We understand that the City is facing a severe budget shortfall in 2011. However, by eliminating one of the LPB Coordinator positions, there will be significant, adverse effects on the Historic Preservation Program as a whole. The program relies on the volunteer nature of Boards and Commissions as well as neighborhood support. More than ever, it is important for the City to leverage this broad-based support to create stable, sustainable, and economically viable neighborhoods. Maintaining staff levels is critical for the continued betterment of the places that matter to us. Given the ordinance-mandated design review process for the more than 400 individual landmarks and seven historic districts, reducing staff levels will negatively impact property owners, developers, business owners, and the general public. The review of landmark nominations by the LPB will be reduced to a quarterly basis from the current twice-a-month meeting schedule. In addition, the current twice-a-month board/commission meetings for the International Special Review District, Pioneer Square Historical District, and Pike Place Market Historical District will be reduced to one meeting a month.

The loss of this position will cause severe negative impacts on development citywide:

- Development projects will be greatly delayed if project proponents must wait for Landmark nomination and designation during the permitting process
- Certificates of Approval will be significantly delayed.
- Master Use Permit and SEPA referrals will be delayed because the 14-day review period will be extended to 28 days or longer.

The loss of this position will cause severe negative impacts on owners of City Landmarks, business and property owners in designated historic districts, and the general public:

- Limited outreach will be provided to the public.
- Limited technical assistance will be provided to those preparing nominations.
- Limited technical assistance will be provided to property owners and tenants in the Certificate of Approval process (no site visits to discuss proposed changes).”

We are asking that these two potential areas of severe budget cutting be well thought out before anything is enacted which would potentially undo and undermine neighborhoods and history in such a way, as we may never recover the losses.

Sincerely,
Monica Wooton, President Magnolia Historical Society,
Member QA/Magnolia District Council