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October 21, 2014

The Honorable Ed Murray, Mayor of Seattle
Honorable Seattle City Council Budget Chair Nick Licata

Dear Mr. Mayor and Budget Chair Licata,

The Lake City Neighborhood Alliance (LCNA) is comprised of 24 member organizations representing neighborhood, business, faith-based, school, special issue, and service provider groups throughout Lake City. We are writing in response to the goals laid out in the Mayor's Proposed Budget. This letter emphasizes and reiterates our specific budget priorities that will ensure safety, affordability, vibrancy, interconnectedness, and innovation for the Lake City Hub Urban Village (HUV) and our Lake City neighborhood communities.

SAFE CITY

POLICE RESPONSE. Police advocacy, responsiveness, law enforcement, investigation, and crime prevention education are critical to our safety and quality of life. We applaud the efforts your administration and the City Council have made in hiring Chief Kathleen O'Toole and working towards full compliance with the 2012 U.S. Justice Department's mandate. We fully support hiring and training new police officers. It is important to Lake City that the **North Police Precinct receives its fair share of new community, patrol, and investigative officers.**

We recognize that major crimes occur with higher frequency in Seattle's downtown and south areas than in Lake City. That said, the North Police Precinct is Seattle's largest and most populated precinct (32 square miles and >240,000 people). We are very concerned about the drug dealing, public alcohol and drug use, prostitution, and theft in the Lake City HUV. In a 2013 comparison to 9 other business districts (University District, Ballard, Aurora/Bitterlake, Fremont, Queen Anne, West Seattle Junction, Greenwood, Wallingford, and Northgate), **Lake City ranked second in overall 911 incidents, first in liquor violations, third in shoplifting, and second in mental complaints.** Illegal activities especially related to property crimes are creeping into all of our neighborhoods—residential burglaries, car prowls, car theft, and mail theft. Many people perceive that there is little follow-up after burglaries and thefts are reported. That perception gained credence following the leaked (but now refuted) SPD memo about the North Precinct being understaffed: **We urge you to advocate for the hiring and training of more North Police Precinct community, foot- and car-patrol, and investigative officers as part of your budget priorities.**

We greatly appreciate that the North Police District's crime prevention specialist long-vacant position was finally filled. There was a substantial backlog of requests, plus now there are new requests from a very large and populous area, such that the crime prevention specialist is completely booked through March 2015. Please consider hiring and training another crime prevention specialist for the North Precinct.

NEW NORTH POLICE PRECINCT FACILITY. LCNA fully endorses a **new police facility** for the North Precinct to replace the current facility that is undersized and outdated.

FIRE/EMS RESPONSE. Fire Station 39 has only one engine and no aid or Medic One unit. Engine 39 has an annual service capacity of 3,000-3,500 responses. According to SFD 2012 statistics, Engine 39's total responses were 2,620 (2,276 were aid; 344 were fire). In addition, Fire Station 39 received 1,698 backup responses from other fire stations (743 were aid responses). Thus it seems Engine 39 is at or near capacity. Response times to an emergency call are a major concern. Lake City's closest back-up engine and aid/Medic One units are at Northgate's Fire Station 31. That response time is 6.7-7.0 minutes per call. Our next closest engine backup is from Greenlake's Station 16, with an 8-8.5 minute response time to Lake City. As a designated HUV, our planned increased population density is in high-rise buildings. The closest ladder truck is also at Northgate's Fire Station 31. We urge the City to **evaluate Fire Station 39** for adequacy of personnel and equipment.

AFFORDABLE CITY

Like you, we are extremely concerned about the issue of affordability and could not agree more with the Mayor's statement that *"Seattle is at risk of pricing out the very diversity it thrives upon."* Counter to its outdated reputation, Lake City is a deeply diverse community—across age, culture, perspective, and income, and this diversity is widely embraced as a special feature of our community. Yet, income inequality and housing "balkanization" separate neighbors who could be advancing together. We urge you to adopt a policy that strongly promotes **mixed-income housing** and requires builders to include such housing in their projects rather than contribute to a low-income-housing funding pool that is never adequate.

We also urge you to **adopt impact fees** to support development of infrastructure that can keep pace with rapid development. There are numerous areas in Lake City that are seeing new development with inadequate concomitant traffic-safety or other improvements. For example, on 32nd Ave NE in the Little Brook neighborhood located between NE 135th St and NE 145th St, a new, 320-unit, market-rate apartment building was recently completed with minimal/required sidewalk development—this, in an area that has few sidewalks; a hazardous environment for all transportation modes; haphazard street-parking conditions; and a disproportionate number of residents who walk or need mobility assistance.

In Lake City, significant development is happening in pockets within or close to our HUV, with only cursory review and public notice. Congregate housing is important for affordability, but it merits full **Design Review**—regardless of numbers of shared kitchens or size of individual units—particularly as we establish our Urban Design Framework and look toward a future of significant redevelopment, most notably on the Pierre properties.

On another note, as we have conveyed in earlier correspondence, we have strong concerns regarding the **Seattle Housing Authority's "Stepping Forward"** proposal due to its potential impact on some of our most vulnerable neighbors and we hope that you will continue to question the validity of that approach and search for alternatives.

PROTECTING THE MOST VULNERABLE. In this area of the proposed budget, we do not see additional housing, but rather a redistribution of people in the same amount of housing. If people are to be moved out of shelters into housing, there must be additional funding for the latter. Without both more shelter space and more housing dollars, the City is merely rearranging the deck chairs.

Rapid re-housing is not an adequate approach as currently provided. It means rental assistance for a limited amount of time which will not benefit those who do not have adequate income to pay rent when it runs out; or it means turning transitional housing into permanent housing, which is not additional, but merely re-labeled, housing.

As previously stated, we want truly mixed-income housing built into developments, with consistent enforcement of that policy. This housing will require concurrent support services that enable people with extremely low incomes to be successful. Our member-group Seattle Mennonite Church is eager to work with the City as a partner to develop more housing for the most vulnerable in our community.

VIBRANT CITY

A LIVABLE, WALKABLE CITY. Aesthetics are an important component of livability. Lake City Way NE is our Main Street as well as our major business district/corridor. Businesses are changing their old signs to large, brightly lit, electronic signs that adversely affect our neighborhood livability. Street furniture covered with advertisements will not add to aesthetics. Large, garish, changing-image electronic signs and street furniture covered with advertisements are not part of the community's vision for Lake City.

The traffic volume and speed along Lake City Way NE contribute to it being less than a friendly place to walk. Distraction as a result of electronic, changing-image signs imperils walkers, cyclists, and drivers. Lake City Way NE traffic data (collected January 2007-December 2011) document 717 crashes (on average, 143/year), with 21 of those crashes being serious or fatal accidents. Inattention/distraction was attributed to 118 of these crashes. Installation of large, changing-image, electronic signs runs counter to the ongoing efforts of the Lake City Way Traffic Safety Corridor Project and puts a great number of individuals at risk of serious accidents.

Lake City has been fortunate to have the benefit of the Lake City Way Traffic Corridor Safety Project, which officially launched 6 months ago but has been in planning for 18 months. This joint project of SDOT and Lake City residents with substantial support from WSDOT and the State Traffic Safety Commission is applying education, engineering, and enforcement to the task of reducing serious crashes on Lake City Way. Educational efforts are ongoing, as is stepped up traffic-law enforcement; major engineering improvements will begin next year. We desperately need these improvements, as do other neighborhoods. As you know, in the last two years several serious or fatal auto-pedestrian crashes have occurred on high-speed corridors in Seattle, including on Lake City Way, Rainer Avenue South, Martin Luther King Way, 35th Ave SW, and NE 75th St. We support any and all efforts to bring safety and sanity to our streets and hope that you will continue to fund safety projects such as our Lake City Way Traffic Corridor Safety Project.

The City's sign code has had few changes since 1974. We request that the City **update the sign code** to **(1)** include current digital technology, **(2)** better balance the needs of retail establishments with public safety concerns and community standards, and **(3)** promote better environmental legibility. Please consider *how bright?*, *how big?*, and *how flashy?* advertisements need to be. **Please do not allow street furniture paid for by advertisers and displaying ads.** The addition of any street furniture, with or without ads, and *without careful vetting by each community*, could impede rather than enhance walkability and aesthetic quality. **Please support a signage "overlay district"** as part of Lake City's (and any other neighborhood's) Urban Design Framework process. Advocating for a revised sign code and an overlay district have been identified as major Lake City priorities for 2015. We've had a strong and positive relationship with DPD on our Urban Design Framework and Lake City Future First (LCFF) endeavors. We hope to continue these positive relationships as we work with DPD on both sign code revisions and creation of an overlay district.

IMPLEMENT THE METROPOLITAN PARKS DISTRICT (MPD). Now that the MPD has passed, a critical priority for us is a new, full-service community center, an item that was part of, and later removed from the MPD plan. **Council Member Licata**, we appreciate the support you conveyed to the Parks Legacy Citizen's Advisory Committee, noting that *"a full service community center [in Lake City] seems the most effective resource for engaging underrepresented communities and increasing the level of public services available to all residents."*

CONTINUE THE CITY'S COMMITMENT TO RESTORE THORNTON CREEK. Thornton Creek is by far the largest creek system in Seattle, draining most of northeast Seattle and much of the City of Shoreline. It supports ESA-listed Chinook salmon, returns of coho salmon and occasionally sockeye and steelhead, and a robust population of cutthroat trout. For the many neighborhoods Thornton Creek and its tributaries flow through, they, their riparian areas, and their protected open spaces provide a natural, less urban feel to

city life. The City should **complete its study of the causes of bacterial pollution** in Thornton Creek and its tributaries and move quickly to action, taking advantage of assistance from King County and the support of King County Council Member Rod Dembowski and our state legislative delegation. To protect Thornton Creek more generally, the City should **use Green Stormwater Infrastructure wherever feasible** as it constructs new sidewalks and drainage facilities in the Lake City area and the Thornton Creek watershed. The City should also **plan to far exceed the commitment in SPU's Integrated Stormwater Plan** to implement Natural Drainage Systems in just 4-5% of the areas within the Thornton Creek watershed that the plan identifies as good candidates for them. Stormwater has to be managed better to fulfill the promise of the millions of dollars the City is currently spending on habitat restoration in Kingfisher Natural Area and the floodplain just north of Meadowbrook Pond. To this end, the City should also **commit to using vacuum street sweepers in all of the creek basins** where the Integrated Plan targets it. Only vacuum sweepers remove most of the fine sediments that transport pollutants and degrade habitat in the City's creeks.

FOSTER ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY. Lake City was annexed in 1954 when the City expanded its northern boundary from NE 85th Street to NE 145th Street. During Mayor Murray's August "*Find It, Fix It Walk,*" it was surely apparent that our Lake City HUV and neighborhoods lack infrastructure, amenities, and services taken for granted in other neighborhoods and especially in other Urban Centers and HUVs. Infrastructure, amenities and services are needed to support our HUV's high-density, low- and extremely-low income population. According to the available 2010 census data, the Lake City HUV has an ever-increasing population density with 78 percent in rental units (the City's average is 50 percent). In the Lake City HUV 26 percent of rentals are low-income subsidized and 13 percent are extremely-low-income subsidized.

Our Census Tract 100.3 is the only one north of the Ship Canal with more than 20 percent of households considered low-income. In fact, 30.27 percent of households in that tract are classified as extremely low-income. Our Little Brook community in north Olympic Hills (beginning roughly 10 long blocks north of the existing Lake City Community Center), is a *de facto* HUV with high levels of low- and extremely-low income subsidized rental units.

Our community's needs and plans to meet them were identified in the 1999-2014 North District (Lake City) Neighborhood Plan. We now eagerly await results of the ongoing evaluation of the success of HUV planning. Whatever the results, we know that we need a new plan that acknowledges the dramatic changes in our population,—most notably our minority and underserved individuals and families living in high-density, low-income housing—and which includes a school capacity plan for all of North Seattle. While we are appreciative of the ongoing Urban Design Framework process, **we urge that funds be budgeted for updating of our Neighborhood Plan to systematically address environmental inequities** as well as other areas to ensure we have a long-range planning tool to guide decisions into the future.

Critical environmental inequities in Lake City include **(1)** lack of a full-service community center; **(2)** below-gap-analysis levels of park space and no playfields; and **(3)** lack of curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and storm-drain structures in most of our side streets and many arterial streets (including parts of our Main Street—Lake City Way NE/SR522).

New, Full-Service Lake City Community Center. Children, youth, families, and seniors who live in the Lake City HUV and particularly in the Little Brook neighborhood are in desperate need of a new, full-service community center. Families with means and mobility mostly take their children to other neighborhoods to enjoy the recreational, educational, and cultural activities that are not available here. Melting-pot neighborhood connections among diverse children, youth, families, and seniors have no consistent venue in Lake City.

At the time of annexation, the Lake City Community Center was already 10 years old. It had been built by the Lake City Lions Club, and was conveyed to the City in 1955 for \$1.00. The Lions continued to

steward the property for nearly 70 years, with at least two additions over those years. The North Seattle Chamber of Commerce now manages this facility.

Earlier this year, Parks requested an Architectural and Engineering Maintenance Evaluation to assess costs of improving the Lake City Community Center's infrastructure. The scope of infrastructure improvement (e.g., roof, plumbing, HVAC) was estimated to be **\$2,654,580, plus another 60 percent** in additional associated costs (taxes, construction contingencies, design fees, project management fees, building permits). Other than a commercial grade kitchen, no new amenities—like needed elevators and a gymnasium with sports courts—were included.

It would not be cost-effective to spend **\$4.247 million** on our old community center building that could never provide the services we need. **Council Member Licata**, we thank you for your "thinking out loud" at October's North District Council meeting about how we can plan for—and the City can fund—a new full-service Lake City Community Center.

Parks and Playfields. Minimum open-space needs for neighborhoods and communities throughout Seattle's Park System are determined through a process called "gap analysis," which uses acreage, square footage, and number of households as metrics to determine minimum and desirable usable open-space requirements. The last official gap report was done in May 2011. The bulk of this gap report relied on 2000 census data, as the 2010 data were not yet available. Had the 2010 census data been available for the Lake City HUV, it would have shown that there were 1,171 new residents (an increase of 42.9 percent from 2000 census), for a 2010 HUV census total of 3,899. Parks had just purchased a 10,000 square-foot lot on 33rd Ave NE with an office building on it. The combination of old census data and a new land-banked "park" made it appear that our area met minimum open space standards, when that is clearly not the case. Furthermore, the lease agreement between Parks and Seattle Public Schools (SPS) for the recently reactivated Cedar Park School grounds to be used as a neighborhood park is being renegotiated. Concerns have been raised by Parks about the lease terms, putting lease renewal in question and potentially eliminating a neighborhood park. We urge you to **budget for more useable open-space parks and playfields** for the Lake City community.

Curbs, Gutters, Sidewalks, and Storm Drain Structures. Like much of the City north of NE 85th Street, Lake City lacks curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and storm drain structures. The only apparent way to obtain this infrastructure is for neighbors and communities to compete against one another through SDOT's Neighborhood Park and Street Fund applications (limited to \$90,000 per each of the 13 Neighborhood Council Districts).

SDOT's website states that "*the NPSF cannot fund an entire block of 'standard' concrete sidewalk with curb/gutter.* Appropriate projects are those that are less than ½ block (110') in length or locations where a curb already exists and there are no drainage issues." Costs are listed as \$65,000 to \$90,000 for 110 feet, so it is clear that Lake City and other North Seattle communities cannot catch up using these funding mechanisms. **Mayor Murray**, we appreciate your recent remark juxtaposing an elaborate waterfront plan with the lack of basic infrastructure in our neighborhoods. We urge you to **budget funds for curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and storm drain structures** in our North Seattle neighborhoods.

ENHANCE SMALL BUSINESS OUTREACH. We appreciate having been awarded the *Only in Seattle* Grant for 2014 and have found that the model of inclusion and broad community representation is gaining strong support among our diverse businesses. Through first-year funding we have worked to develop LCFF as our lead organization, connect in meaningful ways with Lake City businesses, and begin to engage our whole community. LCFF endeavors to be a sustainably-funded organization that fosters engagement between residents and businesses.

We ask that the budget continue to **support Lake City business development** and advance a strong economic development plan by continued dedication of City staff to support our efforts and by further investment in LCFF through the *Only in Seattle* initiative. This support will help us to further our efforts in

a variety of endeavors critical to our growth, including a formalized “clean and safe program,” support and promotion of our diverse businesses, retail retention and attraction, and meaningful opportunities for volunteers.

We also ask that you continue to **support the City-led Urban Design Framework**, a work group of LCFF. We want to be sure that our many volunteer hours and the engagement of our diverse community will result in a framework the City can support.

INTERCONNECTED CITY

INVEST IN NEIGHBORHOODS. We heartily support your proposal to increase the **Neighborhood Street Fund**, but ask that you consider a different way of distributing some, if not all, of the extra funding. Currently, District Councils vote to prioritize projects, with equal footing given to all Districts. While in theory this approach is laudable, some communities, such as ours, are far behind others with regard to safety and mobility, and would benefit greatly by an extra share of this funding to bring us more in line with other areas of the City. We greatly appreciate the support we receive from the Department of Neighborhoods District Coordinators. Only nine District Coordinators support the 13 Neighborhood Districts. Please consider increasing the Department of Neighborhoods budget to **add more District Coordinators**.

BUILD SIDEWALKS. We are also pleased to see **sidewalk construction** called out as a priority. As you are aware, Lake City neighborhoods lack sidewalks on residential streets, and even on large stretches of arterial streets. The previous budget reserved funding to fill in a critical sidewalk gap on 30th Ave NE, but there remain many arterials that provide no safe walking space.

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS. We support your commitment to providing transportation options, including the **Neighborhood Greenways**, which can help create calmer streets for people walking, riding bicycles and using small wheels. This summer, Lake City welcomed its first Greenway in our Olympic Hills neighborhood, west of Lake City Way, and will be working to secure funding for our second Greenway, in our Cedar Park neighborhood east of Lake City Way.

Our community has had the pleasure of working with many helpful and open-minded SDOT staff members, and we hope to see even more creative cooperation between the various SDOT programs such as **Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program (NTCP), Greenways, and Safe Routes to School**. Good communication between these divisions helps us leverage improvements and bolster cost-effectiveness. For example, we hope to facilitate a neighborhood-proposed Greenway project that intersects with a critical pedestrian signal planned as part of a Safe Route to School; elsewhere, the NTCP had proposed and allocated funding for a traffic circle on a street also proposed as a Greenway whose residents wanted speed humps instead. Communication between NTCP and Greenways resulted in the more desirable solution—speed humps that will calm the highest-speed section of the street and lay groundwork for the future Greenway.

ACTIVATE STREETS AND RIGHT-OF-WAY AREAS. We strongly support the SDOT **open space management** and **urban forestry programs**, which have helped us develop a new pocket park along our Olympic Hills Greenway in undeveloped SDOT right-of-way. Street activation through **Play Streets, parklets, and Summer Streets** is also highly worthy of funding. With our current lack of park space, these opportunities to use street space for play and community-building are invaluable.

INNOVATIVE CITY

EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING. SPS enrollment is growing by approximately 1,000 students per year—an indication that Seattle is a vibrant, family-oriented city. In Lake City, steps being taken by SPS to accommodate this growth include re-opening of Jane Addams Middle School (2014), reactivating and opening of the Cedar Park School (2015), and increasing capacity of the new Olympic Hills Elementary (2017). According to the Mayor’s proposed Seattle Preschool Program Action Plan, the plan will rely, in part, upon classroom space provided by SPS. SPS is currently experiencing capacity shortfalls,

and recently completed “Growth Boundaries” capacity management planning to “right-size” buildings through 2020.

If the Seattle Preschool Program ballot measure is approved, we ask that the new Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning **prioritize the housing of preschool classrooms in a manner that will not adversely impact our limited K-12 school capacity**. If necessary, the budget for this department should be amended to reflect the procurement of preschool classroom space. In addition, we recommend that **impact fees be implemented in order to secure the additional K-12 school capacity** needed to support high-density family housing development.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues. LCNA will be offering more detailed responses to budget items as budget negotiations progress. We look forward to working with you to make our neighborhood and the whole City better places to live, work, and recreate.

Very sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sandra Adams Motzer". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Sandra Adams Motzer
Chair
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206.819.8056

cc: Seattle City Council Members; Laine Ross and Alexis Gallegos, Co-Chairs, City Neighborhood Council; Dass Adams and Dan Keefe, Co-Chairs, North District Council; Christa Dumpys, Neighborhood District Coordinator, Department of Neighborhoods; Katie Sheehy, Senior Planner, Department of Planning and Development