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July 14, 2014

Mayor Ed Murray

Council Members Jean Godden, Sally Bagshaw, and Bruce Harrell
Seattle City Hall
600 4th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98124

Dear Mayor Murray and Council Members Godden, Bagshaw, and Harrell,

The Lake City Neighborhood Alliance (LCNA) is writing to express concerns regarding expedited approval of the Cheasty Greenspace Trails and Bike Pilot Project by the Department of Neighborhoods (DoN), particularly in light of the serious implications of a change in policy for natural area/greenbelt designations.

This Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF) Large Fund Project (LFP) proposal generated such divergence in opinion that some community members attended the June 30th City Neighborhood Council (CNC) meeting to testify against it. Their testimonies prompted procedural concerns in the CNC as to whether the review process by the District Council Review Team (DCRT) and the Citywide Review Team (CRT) had allowed any additional community input other than that of the applicant.

CNC members noted that this proposal was dividing rather than unifying the community. CNC members also noted that approval of this project would represent a major policy departure by Parks in allowing non-passive uses in natural area/greenbelt-designated areas. CNC's recommendation was to approve the other 11 NMF LFPs as proposed but to withhold approval on the Cheasty Project until DoN provided requested information to the CNC at their next meeting. DoN Director Bernie Matsuno overturned the CNC recommendations, forwarding all 12 LFPs to Council for approval.

LCNA believes that the approval-process issues and the significant changes in policy pertaining to natural areas are issues in which all Seattle neighborhoods have a major stake.

- **PROCESS.** Although the review process is internal to the DoN, the consequences are widespread. The review procedures used to evaluate the projects highlight problems with how dissenting opinions, concerns, and requests for information are addressed. If DoN truly seeks to “[provide] programs and services that engage people in civic participation, foster stronger communities, make government more accessible, and preserve and enhance the character of Seattle’s neighborhoods”¹, NMF reviews that preempt or override community input and ignore information

requests are counter to the role of the Department and the spirit underlying its creation.

- **POLICY CHANGES AND IRREVERSIBLE CONSEQUENCES.** Cheasty Greenspace is physically located on Beacon Hill, but other areas of the City also have natural areas/greenbelts that enjoy community advocacy. Any change in policy that reduces the protection and stewardship afforded natural areas² requires vetting throughout the community. Once those revised policies are implemented—even as a pilot project—changes in our natural areas/greenbelts are irrevocable. We will never get them back.

In summary, due to the process by which the Cheasty LFP has been advanced and its broad implications, LCNA strongly opposes approval by the Council and the Mayor until CNC requests have been met and CNC's final recommendation made. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns.

Very sincerely,



Sandra Adams Motzer
Chair
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FOOTNOTES:

1. <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/>
2. http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/briefings/park_classifications_attachment.pdf

cc: Council Members Burgess, Clark, Licata, O'Brien, Rasmussen and Sawant; Bernie Matsuno, Director, Department of Neighborhoods; Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent, Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation; Laine Ross and Alexis Gallegos, Co-Chairs, City Neighborhood Council; Dan Keefe and Dass Adams, Co-Chairs, North District Council; Sandra Pinto de Bader, Coordinator, Urban Forestry Commission; Rachel Acosta, Coordinator, Board of Parks Commissioners