

*Bernadette Agor Matsuno*  
*Confirmation - Response to Council Questions*  
*April 8, 2014*

1. *What are your major goals for the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) over the next four years? What do you see as the primary challenges facing the DON over the next four years?*

**GOALS:**

This year and next a key goal will be to assist in answering the following question: What is the future of the current City Neighborhood Council (CNC) and District Council (DC) system given the establishment of City Council elected districts in late 2015? The City Council is in the early stages of determining how it might conduct legislative business when councilmembers are elected by district; at the same time, I will be a resource to the Council, and especially the Executive side of government in determining whether its operational practices should align with the council district boundaries. Community members involved in the CNC/DC system are also discussing this question and have varying opinions on the subject. DON will be a part of this conversation to ensure that the community's voice is heard on this topic and any other topic of importance to neighborhoods. For me, what cannot be lost is the community's "voice," regardless of the shape or form it takes.

I also think it's important for DON to continue its work of building and strengthening the ability of historically underrepresented communities (HUCs) to be their own best advocates and to gain even more confidence participating in the City's civic processes. Long-standing, mainstream organizations are skilled and experienced at engaging with the city; developing a similar level of capacity of HUCs is another priority for us since our aspirational goal is to have *all* communities working and interacting with the city effectively.

Another goal is to engage young people in the work of DON and in the City's public processes. We need to demonstrate the connection that younger people (teens, 20's, 30's) should have with City government, emphasizing those policies, programs, and services that are important to them. To do so we need to reach younger people in the same way we've reached out to other communities, i.e. "go to where they are" and use tools that are familiar. For DON that means using technology, social media, and going to places where young people gather.

Finally, DON manages more than 85 P-Patch community gardens across the city. These gardens have capital and infrastructure needs, e.g. upgrading of water system; rebuilding and maintaining ADA-accessible pathways; replacing or rebuilding garden beds, toolsheds, compost bins, signage, fencing, etc. The program celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday last year; some of the gardens are as old, and over time all 85 gardens will need capital improvements. Our goal is to figure out a way or mechanism for addressing these infrastructure needs of P-Patches.

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**CHALLENGES:**

There are a number of challenges and some may actually be opportunities:

Through our Neighborhood District Coordinator program and Public Outreach and Engagement Liaisons (POELs), DON is able to support city departments in their outreach and engagement efforts. We are a very good resource to departments and have demonstrated our ability to do this work well, with our POELs in particular. The challenge is ensuring that departments understand that DON plays a supporting role in their outreach and engagement work, but cannot do this work for them. However, by working together, we all gain a better understanding and appreciation for doing outreach well and identifying best practices along the way.

When the election of City Councilmembers by district is in place, DON (as well as other departments) could be faced with how we address competing priorities or needs for city resources – district versus citywide or district versus district. I believe there is a public perception that the new districts will lead to greater accountability and responsiveness by the elected councilmember, i.e. if a constituent has an issue, a call to the Councilmember’s office is all that is needed to have the matter resolved. In some cases a simple request for assistance to the appropriate department may be all that’s needed, such as asking DON to speak with a group about a Matching Fund project they’d like to undertake. But there will be bigger and more complicated asks of Councilmembers, and I’m hopeful that we will use established policies and criteria to decide how to deal with these.

There are community members who believe that the city’s neighborhood planning function should be part of DON, mainly because they believe it once was. In fact, when the City and communities did neighborhood planning work in the 1990’s, the City established the NPO (Neighborhood Planning Office) to lead the effort, but it was separate from DON. Now DPD is charged with undertaking the City’s planning work and DON’s current role is to support DPD’s neighborhood planning/community development work by providing outreach and engagement services. This arrangement works well because it builds on the expertise of each department, and it should continue, despite calls for the planning function to be part of DON.

2. *DON manages Historic Preservation, the Neighborhood Matching Fund program, the Neighborhood Districts and Coordinators, the Outreach and Engagement program, and the P-Patch Community Gardening Program. Please identify an opportunity for improvement in each of these programs that you plan to address in the next four years.*

Over the next four years it will be important for DON to identify and be clear about outcomes for each of its programs. For example, we describe several of our programs as being resources for “building a strong sense of community” in neighborhoods and communities. Before we can move to identifying outcomes and metrics for knowing success, we need a shared understanding - a common definition, per se - for what we mean when we say “build community.” In addition, when we observe a “strong sense of community,” we need to define what types of characteristics make it so. This is an example of the kind of

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exercise we have begun to undertake at DON toward the goal of having realistic outcomes for all the programs and services we offer.

Examples of program improvements that are in progress or planned:

- Creation of a web-based data system that will allow community members to apply for a P-Patch plot and make payments on-line. From a customer perspective, the on-line system will make access easier; and from the department perspective, programmatic data will be centralized and more easy to track and evaluate our program activity. We will continue to accept hard copy applications and payments as we do now, particularly for those who may not be comfortable with using an on-line system.
- Due to the popularity and effectiveness of the department's Public Outreach and Engagement Liaisons (POELs) service – as evidenced by the 2014 NBC-LEO City Cultural Diversity Award made to the City by the National League of Cities – I plan to grow the service. We would like to involve POELs in more city projects or initiatives. Plus, there is interest in using POELs to assist their community groups in becoming successful applicants to the Neighborhood Matching Fund, as well as other funding sources. We first need to develop a recruitment strategy for expanding our pool of POELs.

*3. What successes have you had of which you are most proud?*

When I returned to City employment in February of 2011, I was asked to work toward improving relationships with other city departments and the Mayor's Office. Over the past three years I've made significant progress in this area and would describe my current working relationship with peers as very good. As a result, DON is often called upon to assist with interdepartmental work. Some examples include the Othello Station transit oriented development project, the Multicultural Community Center planning, City Light's Denny Sub-station project, and participation on the City's Neighborhood Actions Teams (NATS). So much of DON's work via the Neighborhood Matching Fund, P-Patch Program, and Historic Preservation is dependent upon having positive relationships with staff and Executives of capital departments. We have these relationships and are able to influence the decision-making and actions of these departments to benefit communities as well as the City.

I'm also proud of the results achieved with 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy dollars appropriated to the P-Patch Program. Because staff is creative, has very strong relationships with Parks and SPU staff and other property owners, and has support from the gardening community, the program was able to build 22 new or expanded gardens instead of four which was the target number established by the Levy Oversight Committee (LOC). This amazing outcome convinced the LOC to provide additional funds to the P-Patch Program (underspent funds from other Levy projects) to build five more gardens, which are nearly complete.

Despite having to make budget reductions in recent years, we were able to maintain department operations in a way that minimized the impact on communities. No programs or services were completely eliminated – although the level of service was slightly reduced in some instances. But we were committed to continuing our work with communities; we wanted DON resources to

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remain available to groups to undertake projects and to ensure that the community's voice was not lost in City decision-making.

Lastly, I am proud of two aspects of our administrative function: 1) our long-standing track record for processing reimbursement requests within 48 hours of receipt (and our vendors are appreciative too!). No matter the size or budget of the vendor, the 48-hour rule applies, and we consistently abide by the rule; and 2) for several years DON has had the highest utilization of WMBEs among City departments.

*4. What is your general philosophy for how to most effectively work with a City Council? How will you be responsive to Council requests, in particular regarding priorities that differ with those of the Executive branch?*

My general philosophy to work effectively with Council is:

- Be as responsive and timely as possible, with the understanding that I am part of the Executive side of government. I expect the same of my staff when called upon for information or assistance.
- Be aware of Council priorities, and where consistent with Mayoral priorities, develop proposals that are satisfactory to both. When priorities differ, my approach is to provide Council with information to assist with their analysis, and/or to share the Executive's rationale on the issue. I view my role as a communicator back to the Mayor (from the Council) when there is a difference in priorities or perspective.

I formally interact with the Council through the Seattle Public Utilities and Neighborhoods committee and address issues the committee raises in our monthly meetings. Upon request, I meet with the committee chairperson, and I'm also responsive to inquiries from individual councilmembers.

*5. How will you work with other Departments to achieve the goals of the City? How about outside stakeholders?*

Given the nature of DON, much of the work we do for and with communities is done in collaboration with other city departments, public entities, and private funders. For example, DON, the Seattle Foundation Neighbor2Neighbor Fund, and Human Services Department (HSD) are participants in a funding and organizing strategy to ensure that historically underrepresented communities (HUCs) actively participate in the planning for a multicultural community center in the Rainier Valley. It is important for HUC voices to be heard on this project as well as other public engagement efforts the City undertakes. Doing this work and supporting HUCs should result in improving the community's comfort level and experience in civic processes.

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Other examples of DON work with city departments or stakeholders include:

- The City's neighborhood planning/community development work intended to achieve the goal of having livable and walkable neighborhoods: DON works with DPD, Seattle Department of Transportation, Office of Housing, and Office of Economic Development on cross-department efforts throughout the city. In these cross-department collaborations, DON plays the primary role of assisting with and carrying out strategies to engage community members in this work. DON continues to be the lead advocate for ensuring the voice of the community is heard and has been instrumental in having our partners become advocates too.
- Strategizing and assisting Seattle City Light (SCL), Public Utilities (SPU), and Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) when the disposition of city property is anticipated: Our role includes helping community members understand the rules that must be met to acquire surplus property, supporting community ideas when feasible, and helping departments develop and implement strong community outreach plans.
- In support of a variety of neighborhood projects that align with City goals, DON works with other entities like the Seattle Parks Foundation, Seattle Public Schools, GROW(P-Patch Trust), and an array of community groups (nonprofits and volunteer-run organizations).

DON programs and services – NMF, POELs, HP, and NDCs – are resources for community members, as well as City departments. Our programs provide assistance, advice, awareness, and support for both audiences – all in an effort to engage community to strengthen the city overall. Because we support both the community and the City, we know how to partner internally and externally, leverage both the communities' and the City's assets, and connect the right resources to the best people to progress the needs of the city and its community members.

6. *What is your organizational management approach? How will you review internal operations at the Department of Neighborhoods to determine if they warrant improvement? What is your leadership approach?*

Organizational management:

- At the core, I manage the organization so as to provide the community with resources that are relevant, and I do so in a way that is transparent, "friendly" to the user, responsive, and timely.
- I strive for functional alignment of programs and services whenever possible which leads to increased efficiencies and seamless delivery of service to the community. Program and staff collaborations are also encouraged with the hope that it leads to creative thinking and innovation for problem-solving.
- I survey community members, both formally and informally, to get feedback about the work we do and how it's done. I also encourage similar feedback from staff and partners. For example, DON uses WEBGrants as our vehicle for accepting NMF applications online. Recently our customers – community members who are applying for funds or have already received an award – expressed concerns about glitches in the system. As a result of their feedback, we are using a small group of

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community volunteers to help us identify the problems they've experienced and to serve as "testers" to ensure that the fixes we make actually work. Asking community members to serve as advisors, to give us feedback or provide input, is a core value of DON.

- Due to the fact that DON is a small department with six major programs areas, I use a flat-line management style, especially with the Director's Team. We problem-solve and collaborate on needs and issues that affect the department, as well as the communities we serve.
- I have an open-door philosophy toward the entire staff, and I make myself available to community members – there is rarely a week that goes by when I don't meet 1:1 with a community member.
- Lastly, I want to move forward rather than revisit the past or keep structures and processes in place that may be outdated. I encourage staff to be innovative and change our systems while ensuring that RSJ principles are intact.

Leadership approach:

- I try to be proactive, anticipating what's coming down the pike and trying to get out in front.
- I try to be a good listener, hearing from a variety of voices (easy and not so easy things to hear) and attempt to take the best of everything I've heard to make a decision.
- I can be decisive, yet willing to alter my position when new or previously unknown information comes to light. I try not to be premature in my decision-making.
- I try to lead by example; lead by modeling.
- Although I'm conflict adverse, I'm learning and trying to deal with conflict in a healthier way, but it continues to be a challenge.
- Finally, I strive to be a democratic leader and have been successful at being one.

7. *Give an example of your strategic planning abilities and describe an experience using strategic planning.*

Our P-Patch Community Gardening Program recently undertook a strategic planning process to answer the question posed by the Executive and Council: How can the city grow community gardening – in Seattle and throughout the region – if current program resources remain the same or with only minimal increases in the future? Although I was not directly involved in the planning process, I was responsible for defining the purpose, articulating expected outcomes, and finding a revenue source for this unbudgeted work. At the end of the planning process – which involved community stakeholders, P-Patch staff, P-Patch gardeners, City Council and other department representatives – a "roadmap" for meeting this demand was prepared and it included 11 recommendations. Four of the recommendations were identified by staff as high priority, so we are exploring options for addressing these items via partnerships with other organizations and a modest increase in the program budget.

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8. *In your position, how will you continue to expand successful POEL and PACE programs? Have you identified other opportunities specific to DON in terms of the Race and Social Justice Initiative?*

As noted in an earlier response, we hope to expand the POEL program in two ways - to meet the demand for POEL services and expertise and to explore ways for POELs to be a resource to their communities when seeking public or private funding. To accomplish this, we need to develop a mechanism for bringing more POELs on board and ensure that those we recruit are appropriately skilled to do the work, especially the work of assisting with the development of fundable projects.

PACE is another highly successful program of DON. For two years we “piloted” PACE – a leadership development program – to learn how to do this work well and effectively. It’s been done on a shoe-string budget each year by existing staff on top of their regular workload. With PACE we have intentionally recruited new and potential leaders from historically underrepresented communities, and we are beginning to see their learned leadership skills in action. For the first time, several are leading a project in their community; others are joining organizations; and others are actively participating in the City’s civic engagement processes. I am committed to continuing this program, but I don’t anticipate an expansion of PACE (and possibly a scaling back of the program) without additional resources.

Lastly, when considering the Equity Areas called out in the 2014 RSJI Workplan, our work will be most impactful in the following ways:

- With POELs, working to minimize the displacement of refugee and immigrant small business owners when development occurs.
- Promoting the Neighborhood Matching Fund as a resource for addressing public safety infrastructure concerns, e.g. “walking school bus.”
- Partnering and supporting initiatives that increase racial equity in life expectancy, e.g. Remote Area Medical Clinic.
- Increasing access to healthy foods in lower income neighborhoods by making donations of produce to local food banks from our P-Patch “giving gardens.”

9. *Describe a challenging experience that you had in your department as you continue your efforts to build racial equity. What was the outcome? In your position, how will you support and implement the Race and Social Justice Initiative?*

Upon my return to the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods (DON) in February 2011, the department’s leadership budget was drastically reduced. Within the budget cycles of 2011 and 2012, the department’s Deputy Director and Division Director positions were abrogated and have not been replaced. Both these positions were held by women of color. I have continued to emphasize that the department’s workforce be reflective of the communities we serve. I believe we have continued to meet, if not exceed the racial demographics of the City of Seattle which is provided in the chart below:

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<b>2010 Seattle Census Racial Demographic Data</b>		<b>City Employees (as of 12/2013)</b>	<b>DON Employees (as of 12/2013)</b>
Total Population	608,660	10,394	58
White	69.5%	63%	55%
African American	7.9%	12%	14%
Asian	13.8%	15%	22%
American Indian/Alaskan	.8%	2%	2%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.4%	1%	0
Latino/Hispanic	6.6%	5%	5%
Two or more races	5.1%	3%	2%

Since 2011, DON has developed and implemented a Race and Social Justice workplan under my leadership. We will continue to carry out the programs and services of DON with RSJ in mind and achieve outcomes as noted below:

- Maintain a workforce that is reflective of the city’s population (as illustrated in the chart above.)
- Increase the number of people from historically underrepresented communities that engage in civic processes throughout the City, to include businesses.
- Promote our Neighborhood Park and Street Fund and Neighborhood Matching Fund to address public safety infrastructure concerns.
- Promote access to healthy activities through the P-Patch Program and Neighborhood Matching Fund.
- Use the Workforce Equity Guide to conduct a departmental analysis of representation and pay and develop strategies to address pay gap and inclusion issues.
- Take advantage of opportunities for DON staff and the community to further the RSJ principles (ex. sponsored RACE exhibit and facilitated workshops; supported staff attendance to Governing Racial Equity Conference).

*10. What specific and measurable outcomes should DON look to when measuring success?*

DON’s mission is to enable community members to be actively involved in the life of their community and to engage and partner with local government to improve the quality of community life. We know that the mission has been accomplished when community members become their own best advocates and have the “know how” to build strong communities where people are actively engaged.

Listed below are examples of measures used to gauge our success:

- Volunteer time donated to neighborhood projects.
- Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF) projects awarded and completed.
- First time applicants to the NMF.
- New P-Patch gardeners; and new, expanded, or updated gardens.
- POELs bringing underrepresented community members to City conversations.



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- PACE graduates demonstrating new and increased civic participation.
- Community advisory committees truly reflecting the interests of community members.

*11. Using Neighborhood Greenways as an example, how can DON promote neighborhood connections and coordinate with other departments?*

In consultation with the Seattle Neighborhood Greenways and by partnering with SDOT, DON's Neighborhood Matching Fund program is able to promote and support the pre-development work. Examples of this work include community outreach to determine the level of support for a greenway project and to hear people's perspective on the proposed greenway route, and non-arterial design elements that would make the greenway experience enjoyable for all users, such as rest stops along the route that also serve as gathering places. To promote greenway enhancement projects, DON and SDOT have collaborated to develop "quick information sheets" which provide a menu of project types and funding opportunities via the NMF. Historically, DON has partnered with other departments and public entities to respond to neighborhood concerns or interests. We look for these kinds of opportunities.

DON staff serves as "neighborhood connectors." One strategy we use to build a strong sense of community within a community is to introduce and connect people and organizations who share the same interest or concern. Bringing people together to take collective action was the important first step in the following:

- Planning for a shared multicultural center in Southeast Seattle.
- Implementing the Community Cornerstones Project which focuses on equitable development near transit stations.
- Establishing Neighborhood Action Teams that include city staff and community members to address multiple issues or opportunities in a neighborhood.

Our role as neighborhood connectors and our ability to undertake and coordinate work with departments has proven to be a valuable City resource.

*12. How can DON work on land use issues to advise neighborhoods of upcoming projects and reduce conflicts?*

DON's role, especially through our Neighborhood District Coordinators and Historic Preservation staff can be one of liaison, communicator, and problem-solver. It requires a strong working relationship with our partner departments – DPD, SDOT, and any other departments that have a stake in a project. My staff is most effective when they are informed of projects and are involved in discussions early in the process, are well informed, and are respected for their opinions and subject matter expertise. When this happens, they can be helpful in anticipating problems and solving them when they arise. Most importantly, DON staff members know the key players in the community, they know the issues, and they have a very good understanding of neighborhood politics. They can be and should be an important resource to City departments and community members as land use actions are being contemplated or when projects are under construction. The most efficient mechanism for DON involvement is through interdepartmental

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teams that are designed to provide regular project updates and address problems that arise in the community.

*13. City employee morale and motivation are important to the Council. In 2012, a Department of Neighborhoods RSJ employee survey was conducted. Would you support conducting another employee survey to help assess where we are today and identify possible issues to focus on? Or do you have other suggestions for tracking the attitudes and concerns of the workforce?*

As a point of clarification, I assume the survey being referenced is the 2012 Citywide Race & Social Justice Employee Survey that DON employees voluntarily participated in along with employees of other City departments. **Please see attached copies of the survey results for the City and for the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods.**

I would like to share some of the results in reference to our department:

- A high 83% of employees are actively involved in promoting RSJI in the workplace.
- 100% of staff believe it is valuable to discuss the impacts of race.
- Nearly 60% of employees said the Racial Equity Toolkit has helped improve policies, programs and budget decisions in the department.
- Nearly 88% felt that DON is making progress with RSJI.
- 95% are comfortable talking about race within the department.
- More than 90% felt that relationships between employees of different racial groups are positive.

Areas we can improve upon include concerns with workforce equity and implementing upward mobility strategies as noted in the survey response. These topics, along with others that employees identify as “concerns,” are and will continue to be the subject of Lunch and Learn sessions we utilize at DON. Lunch and Learn is a strategy we’ve used for a variety of purposes: to clarify departmental policies, discuss ideas for addressing employee workplace concerns, celebrate cultural events, and share stories about our cultural backgrounds (e.g. civil rights movement in Seattle).

When DON and other city departments are asked to conduct the RSJ employee survey again, we will comply and take actions to ensure that DON is a department that works for all employees.

*14. Turnover is a part of any business or organization. Recent data suggest that for the high-level management positions, you tend to bring in new people from outside the City or outside Department programs as opposed to promoting from within. Is this a strategic decision or should DON be doing more to develop talent internally? What more could we be doing to develop new leaders from within DON’s ranks?*

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Since I'm not familiar with the "recent data" being referenced in this question, I will respond based on what I know to be true here at DON.

The management structure at DON is pretty flat. Currently there is the Department Director and three Managers. As noted in my response to question #9, two high level management positions (Deputy Director and Division Director) were abrogated in the 2011 and 2012 budget cycles and have not been replaced. Women of color held both positions and were hired from outside the City employee pool by the director who preceded me. So, as I began my first full year as DON Director (Jan 2012), the flat-line management structure was in place and remains today.

In mid-2012 one of the program managers retired. The vacant position was advertised as a six-month "out of class" opportunity for City employees only; four candidates applied, but none were from DON. Candidates were interviewed and we filled the position. Six months later the employee was offered the permanent manager position, accepted, and remains a member of my management team.

Since mid-2012 there have not been open management positions to fill at DON. If and when there is a vacancy, my plan will be to invite and give serious consideration to *all* candidates who possess the skills, experience, and qualifications to manage people and programs well. The candidates must also have the ability to establish and maintain strong working relationships, because the work of DON is highly dependent on relationships!