



March 15, 2013

Mayor Charlie Hales
City Hall, 1221 SW 4th Ave., Rm. 340
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Mayor Hales:

As a volunteer advocate for Impact NW and speaking for the S.E. District Senior Advisory Council (SEDSAC), I implore you all to find a way to prevent another year of painful cuts to the City's District Senior Center Services Program! The programs should be at the top of the Bureau of Parks and Recreation's list of priorities and not relegated to the bottom of the heap under "Aging and Disability Pass Through".

Portland's 1995 Strategic Plan for Serving Senior Adults called for a long-term partnership between the PP&R Bureau and Multnomah County's Aging and Disabilities Services Division to improve and enhance the lives of our low-income, often frail and partially disabled (i.e., extremely vulnerable) residents. A core part of the PP&R mission was to provide and coordinate recreation services and programs "for diverse ages and abilities that contribute to the health and well-being of community members."

One of the primary budget objectives of the PP&R Bureau was to "maintain equitable access to recreational programming, services, and/or properties and facilities, especially for the most vulnerable populations." Today, the PP&R mission and objectives appear to be essentially the same.

About 1.34% or around \$5.66 million of the total PP&R General Fund budget "passes through" to Multnomah County to be granted to ADSD District senior centers in the city. A little money goes a long way, as it is very carefully managed and accounted for. The city's proposed 10% reduction in budget would be very serious indeed: \$565,819 in lost revenue for all centers, resulting in a 26% lowering of the total allocations to each center from the county's ADS division.

But the need and demand for all senior center services and supports continued to grow, a trend extending far into the future.

Tens of thousands of low-income seniors take full advantage of the services and programs offered by the city's District Senior Centers. According to the excellent Annual Report from Lee Girard, Program manager of the Community Services Department of ADS, the city's District Senior Centers from 2010 through 2012 served over 200,000 participants who took advantage of the nearly 20,000 recreational and life-enriching and life-sustaining activities ("focal point" activities) offered. In addition, nearly 80,000 seniors participated in over 10,000 health promotion activities—all of which were presented at very little or no out-of-pocket expense to the participant.

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OUR MISSION: To help people prosper through a community of support.

Over that same three year period, a combined value of \$2.1 million from volunteer hours contributed greatly to the success of these programs. Furthermore, the four non-profit agencies/consortiums which contract with the county to operate the senior centers have leveraged more than \$1.5 million from other funding sources to provide essential services, such as access to information, case management, transportation for all purposes, and so much other support for the neediest in our neighborhoods.

From 2011 to 2012, our SE Multicultural Center, Impact NW's Senior Program, increased its total number of duplicated participants by 35% (18,523 in 2011 to 25,029 in 2012). But because we were understaffed and underfunded, we could manage only a 6% increase in the number of activities we provided (1,341 in 2012 vs. 1,267 in 2011). Other senior centers had similar trends.

As the number of seniors steadily increase, we will be faced with an ever-increasing demand for services and supports, with fewer staff and a smaller budget if these 10% cuts (amounting to about \$96,700 for the SE District center) are not added back this spring. Some centers may have to lay off 2 or 3 staff members, and they will be unable to continue many of the activities. All of the centers have resorted to voluntary membership dues to supplement their meager resources, but relatively few participants can afford them.

There are real human/social consequences to continued cuts in our programs. Some of our seniors, especially those who live alone, are in extreme poverty, and have little or no family support could: 1) have less motivation to come to the centers on a regular basis; 2) have even less social contact with their friends and center staff/volunteers, particularly with their case managers who have offices at our center; 3) suffer further physical and mental decline, especially from depression and related illnesses, accidental falls, untreated dementia, and other common illnesses; 4) experience a tougher time adjusting to and gaining from the state's evolving health care/long term care systems; and 5) experience difficulty with transportation to and from the center (possible cuts to lift-bus service). The net result: more social upheaval in our community and higher costs to the city, county, state, and nation.

Since this District Senior Center Services Program is so important and integral to the new Oregon Health Plan and Multnomah County's ADSD programs, particularly with the issue area of Health Promotion, I hope the City and County can reach an agreement on the sharing of funding responsibilities. Also, I think realignment or restructuring of the programs within the PP&R makes sense.

Thank you for doing everything you can to preserve the District Senior Center "Focal Point" and Health Promotion Programs!* We at the SE Multicultural Service Center extend an open invitation to you all to visit our facility at any time, especially between 10 and 1, when the center is really busy. See for yourself what a success story these programs have become!

Sincerely,

Darvel Lloyd, member
S.E. District Senior Advisory Council
c/o Impact NW Seniors and Adults With Disabilities Services