



Memo

Date: August 3, 2021

To: Move Seattle Levy Oversight Committee

From: Jim Curtin, Project Development Division Director

Subject: Neighborhood Street Fund Program

Purpose: Share proposal for the 2022-2024 Neighborhood Street Fund program cycle

Action Needed: No formal action, seeking feedback on proposal

Background:

Program Overview

The Neighborhood Street Fund (NSF) is a popular City program that enables the community to propose and help prioritize transportation-related projects that are then built by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). Any transportation-related improvement in the City's public right-of-way with an anticipated cost between \$100,000 and \$1 million is eligible for consideration. Projects can fall into various categories such as art, community placemaking, and safety improvements. NSF is similar but separate from Your Voice Your Choice and Neighborhood Matching Fund, which are led by the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) and fund different types of community projects.

The Levy to Move Seattle provides approximately \$24 million for the NSF program over nine years. Funding is allocated across three, 3-year cycles in 2016-2018, 2019-2021, and 2022-2024. We are on track to deliver a total of 26 community-proposed projects by the end of 2021 which will exceed the minimum 9-year Levy target of 20 to 35 projects.

At the beginning of each NSF cycle, new project applications are solicited from the community. Eligible projects are then prioritized by the community through an initial prioritization phase, followed by a voting phase. SDOT shares the top-voted projects with the Levy Oversight Committee (LOC) for consideration, along with supplemental information about the project location, collision history, alignment with City modal plans, and whether the project is within a historically underserved area of Seattle. Final project selection for each cycle is made by the LOC. Selected projects are typically designed in the second year of the cycle and built in the third year.

2019-2021 Cycle Improvements

In coordination with the LOC, SDOT made process improvements for the 2019-2021 cycle that resulted in record participation, particularly from historically underserved communities in Council Districts 1, 2, and 5. SDOT partnered with DON to make the community process more equitable by holding workshops in the community and in language to help people submit ideas and vote on projects. Over 300 applications were received and thousands of community members participated in the prioritization process. In response to the high number of applications and the viability of the community prioritized projects, the LOC also approved advancing an additional \$2 million from the 2022-2024 NSF program cycle to fund and deliver more projects in the 2019-2021 cycle. This reallocation of funds leaves approximately \$5 million to deliver the 2022-2024 cycle, compared to \$8 million for the 2016-2018 cycle and \$10 million for the 2019-2021 cycle. The LOC ultimately selected 15 projects for the 2019-2021 cycle, with the majority of projects located in Council Districts 1, 2, and 5.

Recommendations for 2022-2024 Cycle

For the 2022-2024 cycle, we recommend a modified project selection process that leverages equitable outreach from the 2019-2021 cycle. Instead of soliciting new project ideas and running a new community prioritization process, we propose revisiting the large pool of unselected project applications submitted during the 2019-2021 cycle, focusing on over 60 projects located in geographic equity areas. New project applications from the community would not be considered for the 2022-2024 cycle.

The proposed geographic equity areas are located in Council Districts 1, 2, and 5 and select areas of Districts 3, 4, and 7. These areas align with historically underserved areas in the city, and are based on the City's Race and Social Equity Index, Displacement Risk Index, and COVID-19 cases reported by King County. Appendix A includes a map of the geographic equity areas.

For the initial application pool, we will rereview the eligibility of unselected 2019-2021 projects in geographic equity areas that received the most votes from the 2019 community prioritization process. If the application pool is too small, we will consider the next most popular projects. And since it has been three years since project ideas were originally submitted, we will do outreach with the applicant to understand current level of interest and evaluate potential scope refinements. All projects estimated to cost between \$100,000 and \$1 million will be eligible, but we will focus on improvements estimated to cost \$500,000 or less, as they are more efficient to deliver within time and budget constraints while maintaining project scope in more areas. With the remaining program funds, this will allow us to build approximately 8 to 10 projects and provide coverage across the geographic equity areas.

Benefits

The main benefit of the recommended approach for this cycle is that it leverages in-person outreach and record participation from the previous cycle, particularly from historically underserved communities. Reconsidering unselected applications avoids the need for the community to resubmit and reprioritize projects, which may be challenging this cycle due to the current global pandemic. Running a new community prioritization process without similar in-person outreach opportunities may result in less equitable outcomes for the program.

Additional benefits include:

- Continues to focus NSF program in historically underserved areas
- Allows for a greater share of the remaining program funds to go directly to building projects, versus funding a new community prioritization process
- May allow some projects to be built early, ensuring a greater likelihood that projects will be completed prior to the Levy sunset in 2024
- Aligns with the 2020 *Levy to Move Seattle COVID-19 Impact Assessment*, which recommended that the NSF program focus remaining Levy funds in predefined geographic equity areas

Next Steps

We are seeking concurrence and feedback from the LOC on this proposed approach for the 2022-2024 cycle. If the LOC is supportive, we will rereview 2019-2021 applications in Q2 and Q3 2021. We anticipate reporting back to the LOC by Q4 2021 with projects for your consideration and eventual selection in early 2022. Lastly, we know that NSF is a popular city program. If we move forward with the proposed process changes for the 2022-2024 cycle, we will communicate the proposed changes to the general public who may be expecting an opportunity to submit new projects ideas in 2022.

Appendix A: NSF project status and 2022-2024 geographic equity areas

