

Dear Council Members:

9.16.16

The Minneapolis Advisory Committee on Aging recognizes the Center as a key program that supports the vision of the Minneapolis for a Lifetime Strategy, creating a “premier location for older residents and visitors” through easy access to a healthy and safe environment, opportunities for leisure and lifelong learning, connection to resources and most importantly a social support system for all older adults. The Committee also recognizes the great value of having a gathering space in downtown Minneapolis for all older adults.

In 2000, the Senior Citizen Advisory Committee to the Mayor and City Council strongly advocated for the creation of a senior center in downtown Minneapolis. In 2001, the Skyway Senior Center opened at 950 Nicollet Mall with Target serving as the primary financial sponsor. At the end of 2015, the Center’s most recent sponsor, UCare, decided to withdraw sponsorship. The Center is now relying on funds raised by the Friends of the Skyway Senior, a one-time grant from HCMC and the Minneapolis Health Department to continue operations through December, 2016. The Skyway Senior Center will close in early 2017 if new funding or bridge funding isn’t secured. In 2015, there were an estimated 18,259 visits by seniors. Exercise classes, health presentations, cultural and social activities are important to help reduce increasing social isolation that many older adults experience. Over 600 structured activities and programs are offered annually which averages 2.5 per day.

Although the Center serves seniors from all income groups, it especially provides a warm and welcoming place for very low income seniors with limited social and recreational opportunities. Approximately 56% of Center visitors have income under \$15,000 per year. The Minneapolis Advisory Committee on Aging respectfully requests the Minneapolis City Council considers providing one-time bridge funding to keep the Center open until December 31, 2017. This support would help the Center:

- Actively pursue sustainable partnership(s) to allow the Skyway Senior Center to operate past December, 2016.
- Develop a program strategy that could expand and/or align with the current and future trending needs of a more diverse older adult population.
- Explore intergenerational models/strategies which could open doors to new resources.
- The ACOA believes the Center should remain in the downtown area to fill a void of service delivery for older adults who live, work, play and utilize the downtown area.
- If warranted, develop an appropriate “exit” plan that minimizes the impact of loss of services and resources the Skyway Senior Center currently provides to its high need populations.

Sincerely,

Jean Greener, Chair

The Minneapolis Advisory Committee on Aging