

**City of Seattle**



**Director  
Department of Neighborhoods**

**Confirmation Packet  
August 1, 2023**

**Jenifer Chao**



August 1, 2023

The Honorable Debora Juarez  
President, Seattle City Council  
Seattle City Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Council President Juarez:

It is my pleasure to transmit to the City Council the following confirmation packet for my appointment of Jenifer Chao as Director of the Department of Neighborhoods (DON).

The materials in this packet are divided into two sections:

**A. Jenifer Chao**

This section contains Ms. Chao's appointment and oath of office form, her resume, and the press release announcing her selection.

**B. Background Check**

This section contains the report on Ms. Chao's background check.

The Department of Neighborhoods helps us make real on our *One Seattle* promise of building thriving, connected communities by engaging directly with neighbors to understand their needs and elevate solutions that improve quality of life for all. With her strong community ties and proven commitment to equity, Jenifer Chao is the type of leader we need driving this department forward to invest in community-driven solutions, respond to the needs of underserved communities with tangible action, and build authentic relationships between City government and the neighbors we serve.

Working with the City of Seattle since 2009, Ms. Chao has built a reputation as a community collaborator and strong voice for equity and opportunity for youth and historically underserved communities. She previously served on the Department of Neighborhoods' Outreach and Engagement team, where she focused on developing strong and trusted relationships in the Chinatown-International District (CID) through work on the CID Community Vision Workgroup and Sound Transit 3 planning. She also served as the Interim Director of the Office for Civil Rights' Race and Social Justice Initiative and worked in the Human Services Department where she supported the Seattle Youth Employment Program. Outside of her service at the City, she served five years at the Seattle non-profit Neighborhood House, where she supported people looking to achieve their long-term education and employment goals.

I appointed Jenifer Chao as Interim Director of our Department of Neighborhoods following a competitive search process administered by our Seattle Department of Human Resources. We sought input from department staff, the future Director's direct reports, and fellow department directors whose work closely intersects with DON's mission, like the Office of Economic Development, the Office for Civil Rights, the Office of Planning & Community Development, the Human Services Department, and the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs. After meeting with the top three finalists, I concluded that

Jenifer Chao had the inclusive spirit, forward-thinking mentality, and relationship-centered approach to uplift the voices of our diverse communities and drive solutions to make a true impact on people's lives. I've also been pleased to hear acclamations of support of Jenifer's leadership from representatives of organizations including Friends of Little Saigon, Build Lake City Together, Historic South Downtown, InterIm Community Development Association, Seattle Neighborhood Group, the Chinese Information & Service Center, and stakeholders who have worked with Jenifer in her past roles at the City. Review of her performance as a City employee and as Interim DON Director, along with the feedback from community stakeholders, is the process that informed my decision to advance Ms. Chao for your consideration today.

I trust that after reviewing Ms. Chao's application materials, meeting with her, and following Councilmember Morales' diligent Neighborhoods, Education, Civil Rights & Culture Committee review, you will find she is well poised to serve as permanent Director of our Department of Neighborhoods. She has been engaging with communities across our city, evaluating and improving the operations of the department, and bringing needed stability to a team that has had four Directors in the last two years.

If you have any questions about the attached materials or need additional information, Deputy Mayor Greg Wong would welcome hearing from you. I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bruce A. Harrell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Bruce A. Harrell  
Mayor of Seattle

**SECTION**

**A**



**City of Seattle**

Mayor Bruce Harrell

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July 21, 2023

Jenifer Chao  
Seattle, WA  
Transmitted via e-mail

Dear Jenifer,

It gives me great pleasure to appoint you to the position of Director of the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods at an annual salary of \$180,000.

Your appointment as Director is subject to City Council confirmation; therefore, you will need to attend the Council's confirmation hearings. Once confirmed by the City Council, you serve at the pleasure of the Mayor and your initial term is through December 31, 2025.

Your contingent offer letter provided employment information related to the terms of your employment, benefits, vacation, holiday and sick leave.

I look forward to working with you in your role as Director and wish you success. We have much work ahead of us, and I am confident that the Department of Neighborhoods will thrive under your leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce A. Harrell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bruce A. Harrell  
Mayor of Seattle

cc: Seattle Department of Human Resources file



# City of Seattle Department Head Notice of Appointment

<b>Appointee Name:</b> <i>Jenifer Chao</i>	
<b>City Department Name:</b> <i>Department of Neighborhoods</i>	<b>Position Title:</b> <i>Director</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Appointment</b> OR <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Reappointment</b>	<b>City Council Confirmation required?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Appointing Authority:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> City Council <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <i>Fill in appointing authority</i>	<b>Term of Position: *</b> Council Confirmation <b>to</b> 12/31/2025 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Serving remaining term of a vacant position</i>
<b>Background:</b> Working with the City of Seattle since 2009, Jenifer Chao has built a reputation as a community collaborator and strong voice for equity and opportunity for youth and historically underserved communities. She previously served on the Department of Neighborhoods' Outreach and Engagement team, where she focused on developing strong and trusted relationships in the Chinatown-International District (CID) through work on the CID Community Vision Workgroup and Sound Transit 3 planning. She also served as the Interim Director of the Office for Civil Rights' Race and Social Justice Initiative and worked in the Human Services Department where she supported the Seattle Youth Employment Program. Outside of her service at the City, she served five years at the Seattle non-profit Neighborhood House, where she supported people looking to achieve their long-term education and employment goals.	
<b>Authorizing Signature:</b>  <b>Date Signed:</b> August 1, 2023	<b>Appointing Signatory:</b> <i>Bruce A. Harrell</i> <i>Mayor of Seattle</i>

\*Term begin and end date is fixed and tied to the position and not the appointment date.



CITY OF SEATTLE ▪ STATE OF WASHINGTON  
OATH OF OFFICE

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State of Washington

County of King

I, Jenifer Chao, swear or affirm that I possess all of the qualifications prescribed in the Seattle City Charter and the Seattle Municipal Code for the position of Director of the Department of Neighborhoods; that I will support the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of the State of Washington, and the Charter and Ordinances of The City of Seattle; and that I will faithfully conduct myself as the Director of the Department of Neighborhoods.

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Jenifer Chao

Subscribed and sworn to before me

this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2023.

[Seal]

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Scheereen Dedman, City Clerk

## JENIFER CHAO



### PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Proven success in change management, policy, and cultivating intergovernmental and community relationships with 15+ years of experience working in key areas of communication, HR and union collaboration, budget development, and culturally responsive community engagement. Politically savvy, highly skilled, and strategic at operationalizing policy from an innovative and human centered approach that is grounded in equity and social justice. Demonstrated strength in streamlining projects and building resilient partnerships.

### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Streamlined competing projects in politically sensitive neighborhoods under a shared community vision.
- Operationalized race and social justice through culturally responsive community engagement into process improvements, policy and legislation development, and business practices.
- Implemented the first Innovation Fund to promote racial equity that increased funding opportunities for individuals and organizations of color and became the model for future request for proposals.

### RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

#### **Deputy Director of Strategy and Administration; Finance and Administrative Services; Jan 2020 – Present**

Overseeing a \$11M budget and 50 staff in the division working on policy, regulatory licensing, revenue administration, data management, and enforcement for 21+ industries. Managing existing and emerging policies and initiatives on a variety of regulatory policy and program issues, developing funding options, and rate setting that is focused on consumer protection.

Leading development and implementation of legislation, director's rules, and operating policies and procedures to improve regulatory programs that serve the community. Developing and implementing programs and business process improvements in 21+ industries to increase the Consumer Protection Division's effectiveness and efficiency. Growing a work culture that forges teamwork, collaboration, and accountability.

#### **Interim Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) Director, Seattle Office for Civil Rights, Nov 2021 – June 2022**

Called to serve the RSJI team and citywide racial justice work during the transition of new administration. Provided coaching and support to department directors and executive leaders on their department's annual racial equity plans.

Strengthened the existing RSJI network of the City of Seattle employees by building their capacity as racial justice organizers and advocated for their efforts to receive adequate resources from the City. Guided the process and led citywide engagement to codify the Race and Social Justice Initiative into a City of Seattle ordinance.

#### **Strategic Initiatives Advisor; Department of Neighborhoods; November 2017 – January 2020**

Made recommendations to the Mayor, City Council, elected officials, and department heads regarding project staffing, budget issues, and strategic approaches that centered communities. Collaborated across departmental teams that increased the efficiencies and effectiveness in reaching project milestones and accomplishing project objectives.

Anticipated future issues or concerns and implemented strategies that mitigated potential risks or issues. Developed partnerships with key constituencies and maintained community relationships. Used quantitative and qualitative data that informed policy, budget, and program decisions.

#### **Funding Policy Advisor; Director's Office; Human Services Department; October 2016 – November 2017**

Developed contracting and monitoring processes and procedures in partnership with the Contracts Unit and service divisions that created shared ownership. Implemented the department funding manual that standardized operational procedures.

Implemented the first Innovation Fund to promote racial equity that increased funding opportunities for individuals and organizations of color and became the model for future request for proposals.



**Grants and Contracts Manager; Human Services Department; August 2015 – October 2016**

Led the division's annual contract plan and budget, financial, and narrative reports that supported department forecasting. Collected, analyzed, and interpreted statistics, and financial data for annual evaluation that resulted in process improvements.

Recruited, hired, and supervised 10 Senior Grants and Contracts Specialists responsible for developing, preparing, negotiating, and administering contracts. Coordinated shared decision-making that involved the community, intergovernmental representatives, and the City.

**Human Services Supervisor; City of Seattle Youth Employment Program; July 2009 – August 2015**

Planned and implemented high quality employment activities during the school year and summer that resulted in work readiness training and internship experience to 450+ program participants. Ensured service delivery was equitable and in compliance with Federal, State and City regulations and guidelines, including the Workforce Development Council and Workforce Investment Act regulations.

Recruited and hired 12 Senior Counselors responsible for supporting program participants to achieve their employment and education goals. Developed and implemented evaluation tools that analyzed on-going performance, program effectiveness and participant satisfaction.

**Education and Employment Manager; Neighborhood House; July 2007 – July 2009**

Designed new employment related programs that ensured service delivery was equitable and in compliance with Federal, State, and City regulations and guidelines. Developed data collection systems that tracked achieved outcomes.

Recruited, hired, and supervised 10 Case Managers responsible for supporting program participants to achieve their education and employment goals. Built and strengthened partnerships with employers, educational institutions, and community-based organizations that supported strategies and increased self-sufficiency for low income or immigrant/refugee communities.

**Education & Employment Coordinator; Neighborhood House; February 2004 – July 2007**

Recruited and maintained a caseload of 45+ program participants and developed individual training from a service equity lens with participants that helped them meet their long-term education and employment goals.

Recruited, hired, and supervised the Career Developer that supported participants to meet their goals. Tracked participant activities and achievements based on program outcomes and completed documentation that met funder requirements, managed budget, and allocated funds for each participant.

**Career Developer; YWCA; January 2001 – February 2004**

Cultivated business partnerships with employers that developed jobs and internships. Met enrollment requirements by managing the hiring process from diverse recruitment, application screening to interviewing, reference checking and pre-employment assessment.

Met quarterly performance measures in employer recruitment and job placements that maintained program funding. Participated in employer and community-based committees that created opportunities for equity and inclusion in hiring diverse and underrepresented populations.

**Case Manager/Prevention Specialist; Asian Counseling & Referral Service; June 1999 – January 2001**

Recruited, hired, and supervised 10 interns responsible for providing diversity education and developing a peer counseling component. Established relationships with school officials and community leaders that delivered culturally competent programs to the community.

Delivered case management to the Southeast Asian population and provided culturally relevant consultation and education to the community, educational institutions, and social service agencies that promoted equity and inclusion for opportunities.

## **TRAININGS AND CERTIFICATIONS**

- RSJI Core Team 5 - Citywide Organizers for Racial Equity, December 2021
- City Leadership Academy, June 2019
- Results Based Facilitation (RBF) Practitioner, January 2018
- Continuous Quality Improvement (LEAN), November 2016
- Well Spoken Wo/Man Communicating for Success, August 2016

## **EDUCATION**

University of Washington, June 1998  
Bachelor of Arts in Communications

## Press Release

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# Mayor Harrell Nominates Jenifer Chao to be Next Director of Department of Neighborhoods

by [Jamie Housen](#) on February 9, 2023

**SEATTLE (February 9, 2023)** – Today, Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell announced that he will appoint Jenifer Chao to serve as the next Director of the Department of Neighborhoods (DON). Chao, a community engagement leader, currently serves as the Deputy Director of Strategy and Administration in the City of Seattle’s Finance and Administrative Services.

Working with the City of Seattle since 2009, Chao has built a reputation as a community collaborator and strong voice for equity and opportunity for youth and historically underserved communities. Chao previously served on the Department of Neighborhoods’ Outreach and Engagement team, where she focused on developing strong and trusted relationships in the Chinatown-International District (CID) through work on the CID Community Vision Workgroup and Sound Transit 3 planning. Chao also served as the Interim Director of the Office of Civil Rights’ Race and Social Justice Initiative and worked in the Human Services Department where she supported the Seattle Youth Employment Program.

Outside of her service at the City, Chao served five years at the Seattle non-profit Neighborhood House, where she supported people looking to achieve their long-term education and employment goals.

“The Department of Neighborhoods helps us make real on our **One Seattle** promise of building thriving, connected communities by engaging directly with neighbors to understand their needs and elevate solutions that improve quality of life for all,” **said Mayor Harrell**. “With her strong community ties and proven commitment to equity, Jenifer is the type of leader we need driving this department forward to invest in community-driven solutions, respond to the needs of underserved communities with tangible action, and build authentic relationships between City government and the neighbors we serve. I also want to thank Acting Director Sarah Morningstar for stepping up to lead the department during this time of transition.”

“I am honored and excited to serve as the next Director of the Department of Neighborhoods,” **said Chao**. “In my 23 years as a public servant, 10 years in the non-profit sector and as a small business owner, and 13 years with the City, I have always served where I am called to make things better for community. As a Southeast Asian immigrant who calls Seattle home, I understand how critical it is for all communities to have access to government so everyone can thrive. I look forward to building on the work of the department to grow strong community partnerships that are grounded in trust, connected to humanity, and centered in relationships.”

Chao’s nomination follows the selection of Greg Wong to [serve as Deputy Mayor of External Relations](#) in August 2022. Wong served as the Interim Director of DON after being appointed by Mayor Harrell in February 2022.

“Jenifer has worked tirelessly to uplift the voices of Seattle’s diverse communities to ensure they are heard, making her the right leader for the Department of Neighborhoods,” **said Deputy Mayor Wong**. “I’m confident that she will strengthen the City’s relationship with community members and help us drive progress towards Mayor Harrell’s vision of an equitable, supportive, and inclusive *One Seattle*.”

The Department of Neighborhoods (DON) helps the City of Seattle build diverse, thriving communities by connecting residents to each other and government services. The Department provides resources and opportunities for residents to foster community and improve their overall quality of life.

Popular programs include the P-Patch Community Gardening Program, which serves 3,600 gardeners in 90 community-managed gardens across the City, and the Historic Preservation Program, which oversees the protection of sites and objects of historic, cultural, and social importance. The department also invests in community-led projects through the Food Equity Fund and Neighborhood Matching Fund; supports numerous boards and commissions; and engages with neighbors to strengthen relationships.



## **What People Are Saying:**

### **Kathleen Barry Johnson, Executive Director, Historic South Downtown**

“Jenifer understands that the health and vibrancy of our neighborhoods is something to be nurtured and supported as it is vital to the health of our entire city. Across all her work, Jenifer has displayed a commitment to listening to the voices of underserved communities, helping City government work better for ordinary people who may not have access to power. I believe she will harness the power of community relationships to provide meaningful support for our neighborhoods.”

### **Raft Hollingsworth, Owner & CEO Hollingsworth Cannabis Company**

“Jenifer is an excellent choice for this position. She will be a champion to bridge government and community because right now there aren’t many channels for people to communicate with government and power. When she visited our farm, she really did the work to listen and understand problems at a grassroots level, and I believe her commitment to include all voices will make her a strong advocate for our communities.”

### **Pradeepta Upadhyay, Executive Director for Interim CDA**

“We are enthusiastic to hear about the news that Mayor Harrell has hired Jenifer Chao as the director of the Department of Neighborhoods. Our experience working with Jenifer has been only positive, as she has always listened to the neighborhood’s underrepresented voices. More importantly, Jenifer has always supported a bottom-up process in planning within our community. In her work in the Chinatown International District (CID), she helped bridge the disparate voices in our neighborhood by facilitating conversations between diverse groups. Communities like the CID, built by the labor of immigrants, people of color, and the most marginalized, need leadership that Jenifer can bring to the City, especially critical ones like the Department of Neighborhoods. Jenifer will listen and help facilitate working and thriving partnerships with City leaders to make Seattle a livable city for all. She understands the systemic racism that has harmed the lives of communities of color and will work to help repair that damage. We know she will show up and do all she can to make all communities thrive.”

## **SECTION**

**B**



# City of Seattle

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## Seattle Department of Human Resources

Kimberly Loving, Director

**February 6, 2023**

TO: Pam Inch – Senior Executive Recruiter SDHR

FROM: Annie Nguyen - Seattle Department of Human Resources

SUBJECT: Background check for Yen Liem Chao

The Seattle Department of Human Resources has received a copy of **Yen Liem Chao's** background check provided by Global Screening Solutions. There were no findings that would impact their employment eligibility.

Cc: Personnel File

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Seattle Department of Human Resources

Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Suite 5500, PO Box 34028, Seattle, WA 98124-4028  
(206) 684-7999 • TTY:7-1-1 Fax: (206) 684-4157 • Employment Website: [www.seattle.gov/jobs](http://www.seattle.gov/jobs)

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