



June 8, 2018

Jason Johnson, Interim Director  
Department of Human Services  
City of Seattle  
Seattle Municipal Tower – 58th fl.  
700 Fifth Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98124-421

Interim Director Johnson:

The neighborhoods of Highland Park and the various neighborhoods comprising the unincorporated urban area of North Highline are extremely disappointed to hear that the City of Seattle has extended the permit for Camp Second Chance for an additional 12 months at the Myers Way Parcels (Fiscal and Administrative Services PMA #4539-4542). With this extension, the camp will have effectively been present at the current site for 2 years and 8 months, easily exceeding the allowed 2 year stay duration for encampments as outlined in Seattle Municipal Code Section 23.42.056, subsection E.1.

Camp Second Chance established itself on the Myers Way Parcels on July 23, 2016 (“Myers Way Parcels,” 2016), 10 days after former mayor Edward B. Murray declared that the property would be retained by the City of Seattle for the purposes of expanding the Joint Training Facility and for expanding recreational space (“Mayor Murray announces,” 2016). Polly Trout of Patacara Community Services—the organization which would become the sponsor for the camp—is reported to have used bolt cutters to break the lock on the fence that had been securing the property (Archibald, 2017a), thereby allowing the group of campers, who had defected from SHARE Tent City 3 earlier that year (Archibald, 2017b), to trespass and establish their new camp. The status of the camp remained in limbo for some time thereafter.

In a post on her blog concerning a possible eviction of the camp, Seattle City Council member Lisa Herbold (2016), who represents the district in which the camp is located, relayed that she had “urged the Executive [branch of city government] not only to have its work guided by established public health and safety prioritization criteria, but...asked whether outreach workers have the ability to ask for more time if – in their estimation – more time would help get campers access to services.” Seattle City Council member Sally Bagshaw and King County Council member Jean Kohl-Welles, who are not representatives of the area where the camp is located, had requested from Mayor Murray that the camp not be immediately evicted (Jaywork, 2016). Within 5 months of the camp’s establishment on the Myers Way property, the Murray administration proceeded to officially sanction the encampment (“West Seattle Encampment,” 2016), thereby delaying the community’s request to have the Myers Way Parcels relinquished to the Parks and Recreation department for future development of the site in accordance with community wishes.

I want to make clear that the communities surrounding the encampment are not strangers to disadvantage. Our neighborhoods have suffered from a lack of investment going back at least a century, and from redlining in the 1930s. The lasting effects of this lack of investment in our neighborhoods are palpable to this day!

Data from the American Community Survey (5-year Series, 2009-2013) show that Highland Park (Census Tract 113) has a lower median income (\$53,182) and a higher proportion of residents who identify as a race or ethnicity other than White (49.8%) than Seattle as a whole (\$65,277 and 29.4%, respectively). The King County census tract immediately to the South of Highland Park, which encompasses the land area where the Myers Way Parcels are located, shows even starker demographic departures from Seattle.

Census Tract 265 overlays the southeastern-most portion of Highland Park in the City of Seattle, as well as a portion of White Center, which is part of the North Highline unincorporated urban area. There, the proportion of residents who identify as a race or ethnicity other than White increases to 60.1%, while the Median Household Income drops to \$35,857.

Like most Seattleites, residents of our neighborhoods are compassionate and wish to address the homelessness crisis with empathy. However, in as much as the City claims to promote equity, we ask that neighborhoods like ours not continue to be overwhelmed with the responsibility of shouldering the burden of the City's homelessness policies while wealthier, less diverse neighborhoods remain largely unscathed.

Over the past decade, Highland Park has hosted three encampments and served as a staging area for a proposed safe lot for individuals residing in recreational vehicles. This burden has impacted not only our neighborhood, but the neighborhoods immediately south of us along the city limit. No other neighborhood in Seattle has willingly or unwillingly taken on as much and to the same extent!

Given this history, the Highland Park Action Committee (HPAC) has sought resolution from the Human Services Department on a number of items, including

- 1) The adoption of a set of best practices (manifested as our "Neighborhood Protocols for Sanctioned Encampments" which have been provided to the department on many past occasions and are again enclosed below) by which the City of Seattle will abide prior to sanctioning an encampment in any given neighborhood.
- 2) That the Finance and Administrative Services Department accelerate the relinquishment of the Myers Way Parcels to the Department of Parks and Recreation.
- 3) A plan resolving jurisdictional issues that arise from the presence of sanctioned and unsanctioned encampments at the interface of city, unincorporated county, and state land.
- 4) A 10% increase in the number of police officers assigned to the Southwest Precinct Patrol to help mitigate the increased burden on our current resources. (At 124 Full-Time Equivalents for budget year 2018, the Southwest Precinct Patrol Budget Control Level is the lowest in the city.)

Despite a reply on April 18 from Catherine Lester, the previous director of the Human Services Department, the Highland Park Action Committee does not feel that our requests have been satisfactorily addressed. We understand that some of our requests will require coordination with other departments. However, it is our belief that the City needs to take a holistic approach to its encampment-sanctioning process. To date, the methods employed have lacked transparency and eroded neighborhood trust in city government.

**In an effort to allow residents of Highland Park and surrounding neighborhoods to get a better understanding of the City of Seattle's homelessness response, the Highland Park Action Committee invites the Director of the Human Services Department (whomever that may be at the time) to attend our scheduled meeting on September 26, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. PDT for a moderated discussion on homelessness policy.**

We kindly ask for confirmation of acceptance or declination of this request by **August 17, 2018**.

Sincerely,

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Enclosures

CC: Mayor Jenny A. Durkan  
Council Member Lisa Herbold, Chair: Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development and Arts  
Council Member Kshama Sawant, Chair: Human Services, Equitable Development, and Renter Rights  
[homelessness@seattle.gov](mailto:homelessness@seattle.gov)

## Citations

Archibald, A. (2017a, February 22). A new kind of camp. Retrieved June 7, 2018, from <http://realchangenews.org/2017/02/22/new-kind-camp>

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Jaywork, C. (2016, August 02). City and County Councilmembers Ask Murray Not to Clear Homeless Encampment. Retrieved June 7, 2018, from <http://www.seattleweekly.com/news/city-and-county-councilmembers-ask-murry-not-to-clear-homeless-encampment/>

Mayor Murray announces planned usage of Myers Way property in Southwest Seattle. (2016, July 13). Retrieved June 7, 2018, from <http://murray.seattle.gov/mayor-murray-announces-planned-usage-of-myers-way-property-in-southwest-seattle/>

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West Seattle Encampment: Mayor announces 'sanctioned' camp on Myers Way Parcels site. (2016, December 1). Retrieved June 7, 2018, from <http://westseattleblog.com/2016/12/west-seattle-encampment-mayor-proposes-authorizing-one-on-myers-way-parcels-site/>

## ***Suggested Neighborhood Protocols for Sanctioned Encampments***

1. Transparency:
  - A. Provide information about which other sites were investigated and the reasons why a particular site was chosen.
  - B. Provide information on how the race and social justice tool was used in deciding upon the proposed site.
  - C. Identify and work with the neighborhood groups/committees to put together community info sessions including locations, dates, and outreach methods to present the plan for the neighborhoods and the encampment.
  - D. Develop outreach materials that are multilingual and provide language and sign interpreters at community meetings.
  - E. Utilize trained facilitators to run community meetings and have present the Dept. of Neighborhoods, Dept. of Health, Director of Homelessness, SPD, the non-profit charged with outreach and support of the encampment, and any other relevant Departments and decision makers that can answer questions and make decisions. Take our feedback and incorporate any additional needs/resources.
  - F. Publish final plan prior to encampment being permitted.
2. Accountability:
  - A. Provide a written agreement between Neighborhood Group(s) and the City on how long the site will remain, the size of the encampment, how the encampment will be constructed, and how it will be deconstructed.
    - i. For the Myers Way site – we are requesting information on why permits did not retroactively include the months that the camp had been sited prior to becoming sanctioned
    - ii. That Highland Park, Myers Way or any other sites in the surrounding South Delridge/Westwood/Roxbury Hill/ Arbor Heights/White Center/North Highline area will not be chosen again for 10 years.
  - B. Provide a plan and outline the increase of police, fire, EMS, and other services.
    - i. Specific to Myers Way – outline of how situations will be handled that cross city lines between Seattle Police and King County Sheriff's office.
  - C. Assign a consistent contact person within the City to be a single point of contact for neighbors and businesses for specific issues related to the encampment, as well as the unsanctioned encampments/RVs in the area, outside of any emergency situations.
    - i. This contact person should coordinate any needs between other departments – such as SPU, SDOT, etc...
  - D. Implement programs to help reduce homelessness and crime such as Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) and REACH
    - i. In Highland Park and South Delridge within the next 3-6 months.

- E. Provide a timeline and plan for addressing existing unsanctioned encampments and RVs in the area and how any future unsanctioned encampments that may develop as a result of the sanctioned encampment being in the area will be handled.
- F. Provide a timeline and plan for addressing existing abandoned homes/squatters in the area.
- G. Evaluate and increase lighting in the area – especially near any bus stops, residential, and business properties and have regular trash/dumping pick up.
- H. Plan and execute regular public education sessions on issues of homelessness and substance abuse with the appropriate non-profits for the community at large.
- I. Provide updates and feedback sessions via community meetings at least every three months in addition to the community advisory council.
- J. Provide each of the local community groups the opportunity to have a seat on the community advisory council.