



Mike McGinn, Mayor
City of Seattle

March 28, 2012

Tim Burgess
Seattle City Council
City Hall, 2nd Floor

Dear Councilmember Burgess,

I noted with concern your proposed change to the Comprehensive Plan regarding the city's approach to organized, transitional homeless encampments. Your change would alter Councilmember Nick Licata's proposed amendment to limit potential hosts to religious institutions only: "HD 11.1 Guide the operation of safe and healthy transitional encampments located on property owned or controlled by religious institutions to allow temporary shelter for those who are homeless."

As you may know, the consent decree laying out the city's approach to these encampments recently expired. The consent decree that a tent encampment was allowed to operate within the city limits, provided that it met certain standards. There were no restrictions on whether or not a host property was part of a religious facility.

Some of the protections offered by the consent decree have been preserved in the form of an ordinance we proposed to Council last year. That ordinance made encampments a permitted accessory use to religious facilities in Seattle. Many faith communities in Seattle have hosted tent encampments, and they deserve our support for the work they do to provide for basic human needs.

Now that the consent decree has expired, private entities, such as the one that sued the city ten years ago, do not have a way to host an encampment like those operated by SHARE/WHEEL. We have been working for some time to develop reasonable legislation that would honor the intent of the consent decree and codify standards for non-religious sites to act as hosts. We plan to introduce this legislation by mid-April.

I am concerned that your proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan would preclude legislation intending to address these issues. Because of these concerns, I am requesting that you withdraw this amendment so that we can introduce legislation that would honor the spirit of the consent decree we entered into ten years ago. We request that Council have time to consider our proposed legislation. I am available to discuss this issue any time.

Sincerely,

Mike McGinn
Mayor

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