



November 7, 2018

Dear Downtown Business Owner and/or Operator:

I know you are aware of and impacted by the growing concentration of unmanaged homelessness in the City's downtown core. Specifically, at the end of August, City of Olympia staff were seeing growing public health and safety issues related to some 35 tents set up in downtown homeless encampments.

On the Friday before Labor Day, the City was preparing to clean up the encampments on public property and require the campers to move elsewhere. However, on the Tuesday after Labor Day, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals handed down a ruling in *Martin v. City of Boise*, which essentially limited cities from managing trespass on public property if there were not an equivalent number of shelter beds to accommodate unsheltered people elsewhere in the community.

The City, therefore, paused its camp clean-up efforts and other enforcement activity while we regrouped and rethought our approach to responding to unsanctioned camping in shared public spaces.

Since then, the 35 tents counted in early September has grown to more than 300 by late October. We have tracked a 30 percent increase each week in tent campers' downtown since Labor Day. The rapidly growing tent encampments downtown are creating a serious health and safety problem that must be addressed.

The City has a plan that we believe balances the health and safety concerns of the larger community with the limitations imposed by the Ninth Circuit Court. More importantly, it would help the City manage what are now unmanaged and unsafe conditions for homeless campers and the general public.

The plan begins with defining a temporary area or "mitigation site" where the homeless are already illegally camping in downtown and providing a level of order, safety, dignity and cleanliness, as well as creating more legal sleeping spaces. It would also create new standards and expectations, allowing the City to enforce camping and behaviors in the downtown core and other areas.

We've identified the City-owned parking lot at Olympia and Franklin as the most viable location for the temporary "mitigation site."

I understand and share the concern that the location, no matter how temporary, would establish another service for the street dependent population in the downtown core, which already hosts many homeless services and programs.

We continue to explore potential locations outside the downtown core to establish sites and services that help transition those unsheltered on the street to more improved living conditions. However, the reality is that the downtown core has a growing concentration of unmanaged homelessness, and we need to bring order and management to where the issues are.

City staff and I would like to tell you more about this planned, temporary "mitigation site," and answer any questions you have about this approach. We invite you to an **information session on Wednesday, Nov. 14 at 9 a.m., at the Olympia Center, 222 Columbia St NW, Room 100.** I hope to see you there.


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Our Homeless Response Coordinator, Colin DeForrest, leads our efforts on the temporary site. He can be reached at cdeforre@ci.olympia.wa.us or (360) 709-2688.

Thank you for your patience, for your commitment to downtown Olympia and for the compassion you bring to the complex and intractable issue of homelessness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Hall". The signature is stylized and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and the last name "Hall" clearly visible.

Steve Hall

City Manager