

October 15, 2015

The following is a statement issued by the Ballard Chamber of Commerce regarding the City of Seattle's decision to utilize 2826 NW Market Street for a transitional encampment and the inability of City officials to reach a compromise solution for an alternative site in Ballard.

Despite all efforts made by the Chamber and the community to champion a viable alternative site location in Ballard, the decision yesterday by Mayor Ed Murray and Councilmember Mike O'Brien to move forward with Nickelsville's plans to site a homeless encampment at 2826 NW Market Street is disappointing. The Ballard Chamber remains strongly opposed to the use of the Market Street site as a homeless encampment.

Let's be clear: a viable alternative location in Ballard has been identified and could be available for use in the coming months. Rather than move to Market Street, the City could have directed Nickelsville to first locate at a larger, city-authorized SODO encampment site and then transition to the alternative Ballard site as soon as it is available. Instead, the city has chosen to disregard this option and is moving forward with opening the Market Street site.

The Chamber has been very clear from the outset that we are not opposed to a temporary homeless encampment in Ballard. We believe Nickelsville residents deserve compassion and dignity from the community, regardless of the encampment location. We only oppose the Market Street site location and the failed process that led to its selection.

Mayor Murray and Councilmember O'Brien have indicated a willingness to make the alternative site a reality in the months ahead. The ball is now in their court to expedite this option through administrative and legislative channels. The Ballard community will rightfully be watching carefully to see if that commitment is honored.

History of the Alternative Site Selection Process

On June 29, the City of Seattle and Mayor Ed Murray announced a plan to use surplus Seattle City Light (SCL) property located on Market Street - Ballard's "Main Street" and commercial core - for a homeless encampment. The Ballard Chamber and other community stakeholders (businesses, residents and property owners) engaged immediately and expressed concern because there was no notification or public process of any kind related to the selection of the Market Street site. Of greatest concern for us were the lack of process, and the location of the Market Street site within our commercial core and its immediate abutment to residential properties.

We pledged to work closely and in good faith with the City and encampment operators to identify a workable, alternative site location in Ballard. We set to work right away meeting with City leaders and staff, including City Councilmember Mike O'Brien and Mayor Murray.

By late August a viable alternative location in Ballard was identified, and the Chamber worked diligently with other stakeholders to confirm its suitability for a homeless encampment. The Chamber secured participation from a willing private party that agreed to grant permission to use the site (which is larger than the Market Street site) for up to two years for the Ballard encampment. We also confirmed for City officials and Nickelsville that the alternative site could

be cleared and ready for use within 4-5 weeks, well ahead of winter.

Unlike the Market Street site, the alternative site will not cost any taxpayer dollars in monthly rental fees paid to SCL.

A site tour was conducted on September 9 with leaders of Nickelsville and they confirmed the alternative site would be appropriate and was even preferred as it could house more residents than the Market Street option. This information was shared with City officials.

During the first joint meeting of community stakeholders to discuss alternative site options, representatives of the Mayor's office and Councilmember O'Brien stated that the outcome of the search process had to be a "win-win-win" - a win for the homeless in need of an encampment site, a win for the City of Seattle in providing a Ballard encampment site, and a win for the Ballard community by locating the encampment in a more appropriate location outside of its main street commercial core. We could not agree more. The proposed alternative site could have accomplished all of this. Most importantly, it would have accommodated more homeless residents.

Sadly, this did not happen.