

Speak Out Seattle

January 5, 2017

Delivered to:

Seattle City Council President Bruce Harrell
District 2 Representative
600 Fourth Avenue, 2nd Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Public Safety and Seattle Police Department

Dear Council Member Harrell,

The undersigned residents, business owners/managers and/or neighborhood associations of Seattle Districts are writing to you to express our concern that our interests as stakeholders in the City of Seattle Districts are not being heard and considered.

One of the primary functions of government is the protection of individuals' rights to life, liberty and property, which requires enforcement of laws to protect those rights.

Currently and for many past years, the City of Seattle, ("the City"), has not maintained, employed and trained a police force adequate to the task of protecting a city of this size and population.

Simply put, there are not enough police officers present in our neighborhoods to effectively deter crime, respond to 911 calls or investigate criminal activity. Many of our neighbors and businesses who have been the victims of crime have called 911 and been told that no officer is available for hours or in some cases at all. Thus, since no officer responded, that criminal activity does not show up as an "incident" for tracking purposes. Worse still the criminals are emboldened to commit further crimes. We also understand that many police officers are assigned to desk jobs instead of providing protection to our communities leaving the actual count of police beat officers per capita even lower than other comparable cities.

With our population booming and our neighborhoods experiencing increasing lawlessness in the way of open drug use, aggressive panhandling, assaults and property theft (our city holds the dubious title of being number one in property crime), we respectfully request that a "state of emergency" be declared on public safety and that the City Council enact an ordinance that will provide the following:

1. A plan to begin an aggressive recruitment program to hire and train at least 300 new police officers to be designated to each neighborhood equally by the end of 2017, and another 200 police officers by the end of 2019 to address the expected increases in population;
2. A plan and funding to move forward on building and/or remodeling the North Precinct Police station so that it will fully house a sufficient police force for the communities served and with room for expansion based on estimated population increases;
3. Policies that require our police to enforce existing law relating to open drug use, assaults and property crimes to which our communities are entitled to expect.

Our neighborhoods have been promised more police officers for many years, however the city has repeatedly failed to deliver. That is no longer acceptable.

Mayor Murray promised to hire another 200 police officers by the end of 2019. That number is too little and too far out. Further it assumes that 100% of the newly officers will pass the stringent training requirements during probation which is not supported by historical data.

The March 2016 Berkshire Report recommended the City increase its police force significantly. Ron Smith of The Seattle Police Officers Guild and Chief Kathleen O'Toole interpret this report to call for 343.7 police officers in 2016. Even so that number was conservative as cities like Boston which have a comparable population have 600 more police officers than Seattle.

We should not have to wait for a police force capable of protecting our neighborhoods as this should be a number one priority for the City.

Please note that not one member of our coalition is a paid advocate. All of us are volunteering our time, money and expertise to develop solutions that meet the needs of our neighborhoods. Our coalition is intent on preventing further degradation of our neighborhoods. We trust that, as President of the City Council, you will consider our above request which we believe is eminently reasonable in light of the issues we are facing.

We request a meeting on or before January 31, 2017 to discuss your plan forward. Please contact us as soon as possible to set up a time.

Thank you.

Elisabeth James, District 6 Resident
Interim Coalition Chair
elisabethjames@comcast.net

cc: Council Member Tim Burgess
Mayor Ed Murray