

Addressing Street Disorder to Preserve Jobs and Improve Our Quality of Life

These policy recommendations are designed to address violent crime, property crime, on-street drug trafficking and aggressive solicitation in Seattle's downtown core. A broad group of key stakeholders, including social service providers, community council leaders, small business owners and downtown residents support these recommendations.

Summary of Policy Recommendations

1. **Return of fixed-beat police foot patrols** in specific areas.
2. Continued hiring of new police officers to enable **full implementation of the Neighborhood Policing Plan**.
3. Well-defined **restrictions on aggressive solicitation** on city streets.
4. **Expanded scope and better coordination of street outreach** offering support services to homeless individuals.
5. **Increased housing capacity combined with support services** for the homeless and individuals struggling with mental health and/or chemical dependency challenges.

Fixed-Beat Police Foot Patrols

Since 2008, reported serious crime known as Part I criminal offenses have increased 13% in the West Police Precinct—an area that includes the downtown core—compared to a city-wide increase of 7%. In the South Lake Union and downtown core only (excluding Queen Anne, Magnolia, and SODO), major crime has increased a staggering 22% since 2008.¹ The presence of police officers on the street makes a big difference in the public safety atmosphere of a neighborhood. Simply put, cops matter. The presence of a police officer serves as a strong deterrent to crime. The police department should implement a return to foot patrols in neighborhoods that experience a high level of street disorder including Belltown, the downtown core, Pioneer Square and the Chinatown/International District. Officers on foot are much more likely to know the merchants, residents and service providers in their assigned areas.

Hiring Police Officers to Implement the Neighborhood Policing Plan

The City should continue to hire more police officers in order to fully implement the **Neighborhood Policing Plan**, which calls for officers to spend more time in proactive policing in their patrol areas. The City's hiring goal is a net increase of 21 officers per year from 2008-2012. The City has met its targets so far, but it must continue to prioritize this public safety need. Implementation of the Plan

¹ Source: Seattle Police Department crime statistics at <http://www.seattle.gov/police/Crime/STATS.HTM>. Part I crimes include homicide, aggravated assault, rape and robbery, as well as the property crimes burglary, larceny-theft and motor vehicle theft.

is essential for enhanced policing throughout the city, and particularly in its tourist and entertainment districts.

Restrictions on Aggressive Solicitation

A 2009 survey of residents in the greater downtown area found that 66% were concerned about aggressive solicitation.² A separate survey from last year found that 23% of all Seattle residents avoid downtown because of fear of crime or personal safety.³ In response to these statistics and the concerns about aggressive solicitation expressed to the City Council by many citizens, a new city ordinance restricting aggressive solicitation has been introduced for Council consideration. Under the ordinance, aggressive solicitation becomes a civil infraction and includes a \$50 fine. Aggressive solicitation is defined as acting in an intimidating way while asking someone for money in a public place. It includes blocking or interfering with the person being solicited, using physical gestures or profane or abusive language, repeatedly soliciting a person who has given a negative response, providing unwanted services, or soliciting someone who is using an automated teller machine or parking pay station. The ordinance gives the Seattle Municipal Court the authority to require offenders who fail to respond to citations for aggressive solicitation to obtain treatment or other services and perform community service.

Better Coordination and Expansion of Outreach Efforts

During the City's budget process last fall, the Council issued a Statement of Legislative Intent directing the Human Services Department (HSD) to review current outreach and engagement services to people who are homeless. Specifically, the Council asked HSD to look at the coordination of services among human services agencies and the criminal justice system and research best practices from different outreach models around the country. This review is underway and a final report is due April 1, 2010. The Council will be ready to act on recommendations presented in the report to improve these services.

More Housing for Homeless and Those with Mental Health and Chemical Dependency Challenges

For several years the City and the County have focused on the laudable goal of providing permanent housing solutions to end homelessness. This work has produced stable housing for thousands of households. But we cannot stop. The City must continue to adopt and apply cost effective measures to rapidly house chronically homeless individuals, getting them off the street quickly while providing them with the services they need to maintain stability. The City Council will soon adopt the Housing Levy's Administration and Finance Plan that will ensure continued development of more housing with support services.

² Metropolitan Improvement District 2009 Downtown Residents Survey.

³ City of Seattle 2009 Community Assessment of Policing and Public Safety.