



DOWNTOWN SPOKANE PARTNERSHIP

August 19, 2024

Honorable Spokane City Council
City Hall
808 W Spokane Falls Blvd.
Spokane, WA 99201

Dear Council President Wilkerson & Council Members:

I am writing on behalf of members of the Downtown Spokane Partnership (DSP) to share our support for ORD C36544, "Prohibition of Camping Near Support Facilities" scheduled for final hearing and vote on August 19, 2024. The DSP strongly supports policies intended to maintain a safe, clean and welcoming city for everyone.

Spokane must re-establish order in our public spaces. This ordinance can be a tool in helping to maintain the spaces around locations where comprehensive support services are provided to ensure the health and safety of individuals accessing these services and the health and welfare of the neighborhoods where they are located. One doesn't need to look far beyond the gateways to our downtown along the Division Corridor to find examples of why this policy is so necessary.

Within the relatively compact boundaries of downtown Spokane, there is an outsized portion of Eastern Washington's social and emergency services. This super-concentration has fostered the conditions in which our streets and sidewalks have now become de-facto shelters attracting a vulnerable homeless population and the criminals that prey on them. Hazardous encampments on the sidewalks and underpasses near comprehensive support facilities in downtown have created conditions that prevent access, impede business, and threaten public health. Unregulated urban creates unsanitary and potentially hazardous conditions that require neighbors to clean up and mitigate pest infestations, remove biohazards and drug paraphernalia as well as navigate routes for our customers, employees, and tenants to avoid exposure to dangerous illegal drugs. These untenable conditions have forced too many nearby businesses to close and/or relocate, with many more considering divestments from downtown.

No neighborhood should be forced to bear the impacts and issues that have consumed the gateways to downtown. As Spokane works to provide support for individuals seeking treatment and care, it's time to set boundaries to keep everyone safe.

The City of Spokane's [Comprehensive Plan](#) Chapter 10, SH 2.2 "Special Needs Temporary Housing" clearly states the intent to "disperse special needs housing facilities evenly throughout all neighborhoods." As the City moves toward a dispersed or scattered site shelter model and services to achieve this goal, it will be vital that protections are in place to protect all neighborhoods.



As Spokane transitions to this new shelter model and activates opportunities to improve the Division Corridor with de-centralized facilities for addiction treatment, behavioral health and support services, an important interim step is to strengthen provisions that can help this transition be successful. For this reason, we urge the City Council to adopt this ordinance as a preliminary step to implement this new model and strengthen provisions to improve the gateways to our downtown.

This extension of camping prohibitions protects sensitive uses and areas to keep everyone safe. Taking proactive action to ensure the public right-of-way belongs to the whole community, without being subject to a lack of sanitary conditions or threats to personal safety, is the right step for Spokane. We can create more housing options for unsheltered individuals and families while we establish boundaries that keep our community safe.

The DSP remains committed to working with you and our partners to focus on the policies that will support individuals out of homelessness and on the path to regain self-sufficiency. This ordinance is an important tool to ensure Spokane is on the same path.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emilie', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Emilie Cameron, President & CEO
Downtown Spokane Partnership

Cc: Mayor Lisa Brown
Downtown Spokane Partnership Board of Directors