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August 29, 2014

The Honorable Ed Murray, Mayor  
City Hall  
600 Fourth Avenue.  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mr. Mayor:

On behalf of the Lake City Neighborhood Alliance (LCNA) membership, we thank you for scheduling your sixth *Find It, Fix It Walk* in Lake City. We also appreciated your accessibility on the walk, talking with many concerned residents and business owners about all sorts of important issues—not simply those that can be easily remediated by *Find It, Fix It* folks at SDOT, SPU, etc. Please extend our thanks to all the City staff as well for listening to our concerns.

During the conversation you and I had while walking west on NE 130<sup>th</sup> Street, I strongly advocated on LCNA's behalf for the City to execute the interim 2-year lease for old Fire Station (FS) 39 (at the NW corner of 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and NE 127<sup>th</sup> Street). This lease would allow the Urban Design Framework Team to complete their efforts of defining a compelling vision for Lake City as a whole but especially for Lake City's civic core. The Lake City civic core includes the Lake City Library, Lake City Neighborhood Service Center, Lake City Community Center, Bank of America, and the new and retired FSs 39. This area was a special focus of the community's efforts in 2012's Pierre Visioning Project. Simultaneously, *Only in Seattle's* Lake City Future First Team is creating a plan for sustainable, economic vitality along the Lake City Way NE commercial core. Because the old FS 39 site is in the Hub Urban Village and a block off Lake City Way NE, it has great potential as an important part of the core of our community. The general vision of our civic core includes an attractive mix of residential, commercial, and civic land uses, and amenities and public spaces that are safe, active, vibrant, and successful. Our vision for Lake City as a whole also includes affordable housing, with a full service community center and services that better serve our highly diverse residents' needs and make a livable place.

Lake City is at a crossroads. Lake City has welcomed low-income housing and services for many individuals and families. While we recognize the need to support housing for homeless and low-income individuals and families across Seattle, Lake City now has a disproportionate amount of low-income housing. Seattle's Office of Housing has set the limit for extremely-low income (ELI) housing as a percentage of the housing stock at 20%. Old FS 39 falls within the north half of the Lake City Hub Urban Village (LCHUV; NE 125<sup>th</sup> Street is the north-south divider). Per 2010 census data, ELI housing concentration in the north LCHUV is at 21%. Seattle's Office of Housing reports ELI housing by Census Tracts and Block Groups. One Lake City Census Block (100.3) has an ELI housing concentration of 43.1% and is 8<sup>th</sup> highest out of ~135 Census Block Groups in the City. It is the only Census Block north of the Ship Canal with ELI Housing greater than 20% concentration. There are only two other Block Groups outside of the downtown exemption area that are higher than Lake City, and both are in the High Point neighborhood. Thus, designating Old FS 39 for 100% homeless/ELI housing further exceeds the Office of Housing's own limits.

In any community a healthy civic core requires a balance of market-rate housing, businesses, and civic organizations not only to survive but to thrive. We understand that the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) has requested that your office proceed with the former proposal for 100% ELI/homeless housing at the old FS 39 site. Our still-to-be-envisioned civic core simply will not be developed if it is not economically viable. Having 100% homeless/ELI housing in the civic core will derail all of our community's great efforts—Pierre Visioning Project, Urban Design Framework , *Only in Seattle* Lake City Future First—in transforming Lake City into a safe, balanced, and vibrant community.

What LCNA strongly supports is a mixed-income housing model that would require builders to set aside a certain percentage of units for low-income families. With the Pierre redevelopment of 14 acres in Lake City, a substantial number of units could be generated using this approach. One major benefit is that neighbors who are educated, employed, and motivated to succeed serve as role models for Housing Choice Voucher (HCV, or Section 8 voucher) users to escape generational poverty and “live in decent, safe, and affordable living environments that foster stability and self-sufficiency.” (Seattle Housing Authority Mission Statement, [http://www.seattlehousing.org/residents/pdf/HCV\\_P AP Chapter 1.pdf](http://www.seattlehousing.org/residents/pdf/HCV_P AP Chapter 1.pdf)). A mixed-income housing model may be harder to achieve, but the consequences of concentrating poverty as well as not providing equity of services and infrastructure is a known recipe for generational poverty. LCNA will work with homeless and low-income advocacy groups (several are LCNA members) on implementation strategies for mixed-income housing models. These strategies would include working with the City to change Seattle's policy that now allows developers the choice of opting out of including low-income units in their developments. Instead, developers can elect to pay a fee into a fund where each allocation is insufficient to pay for the land, design services, and construction costs needed to build one housing unit (Council Member Sally Clark, Discussion on Affordable Housing, North District Council, May 2014). Now, virtually all developers opt out and pay the nominal fee.

The pastors of the Seattle Mennonite Church located in Lake City note that the homeless they serve would not be eligible for this model of mixed-income housing. They plan to continue their efforts to develop housing for these individuals on their property outside the civic core area.

LCNA understands that this conversation with the City will be an ongoing one. It is critical that Lake City be able to determine what our strong, healthy community should look like. The community's unifying vision through our City-supported Urban Design Framework and Lake City Future First efforts and plan for achieving it via the updated Comprehensive Plan will make our community stronger and healthier in all respects, including housing and economic vitality.

LCNA respectfully requests that the City execute this lease in the short term to give Lake City the breathing space we need to incorporate the old FS 39 site into our planning efforts, and that as our Mayor, you and the Council work with the Lake City community to help us attain our long-term vision.

Thank you for your time and efforts on Lake City's behalf.

Very sincerely,



Sandra Adams Motzer  
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cc: Council Members Burgess, Bagshaw, Clark, Godden, Harrell, Licata, O'Brien, Rasmussen, Sawant;  
Katie Sheehy, DPD; Christa Dumpys, DON; Don Moody, CBRE; Brian Douglas Scott, BDS Planning