



December 10, 2014

Dear Mayor Murray and Seattle City Councilmembers,

As you are aware, the recent non-permitted nightly protests in Downtown Seattle have caused significant disruption and impacts to transportation, commerce, jobs, retailers, residents, employees and tax revenues. They have also reportedly required more than \$500K in SPD resources which will continue to mount if the non-permitted protests continue as anticipated.

On Friday, Nov. 28th, we watched as protesters trespassed onto private property and intentionally disrupted the Westlake tree lighting ceremony - intimidating a children's choir that became too frightened to perform. This unfortunate episode was broadcast live and replayed throughout the weekend on televisions across Western Washington and digitally shared across the nation. The following Monday, protesters took over streets and shut down transit service for nearly three hours in the heart of Downtown. And last weekend, nearly 100 individuals broke off from a permitted march that ended at Seattle Police Headquarters, disrupting both traffic and transit operations, including the forced shut-down of Link Light Rail.

As a result, in addition to an unfortunate hit on our reputation, significant negative impacts are being felt by restaurants and retail stores (the majority of which are small businesses during what is traditionally their busiest time of the year); by hourly and tip/commission-based employees; by normally popular Seattle attractions such as Ride the Ducks which is reporting a 5-percent and 30-percent drop in its reserved and walk-up ticket sales respectively, and by non-profits relying on donations at their Downtown-based holiday events.

Downtown Seattle has a long history of welcoming peaceful, permitted protest rallies and marches. These permitted events allow individuals and groups to peacefully assemble and express their First Amendment right to free speech. They also provide police, property owners and managers, transportation officials and the general public the necessary information for public notifications, as well as to plan and adjust schedules and travel plans in response to planned events.

However, the non-permitted protest marches – across a spectrum of public issues – are being allowed to take over one small area of our city, which is absorbing the greatest negative impact of these events. Clearly, new approaches are urgently needed, such as

requiring a street-use permit for protests that take over our streets. Beyond the marches of the past couple weeks, we've experienced three years of large disruptive non-permitted May Day protests. These marches were advertised in advance by the protestors themselves, announcing their intent to disrupt traffic and destroy property in Downtown, thus the need for new approaches which balance the right to free speech with the rights of those who live, work, shop and visit Downtown.

For the past two years SPD has been quick to confront and arrest protesters who trespass private property or who cause property damage, yet police officers are not currently authorized to halt protests that cause costly disruption to retail and restaurant operations, community events or seasonal visitor attractions.

Every year, the Downtown Seattle Association and Visit Seattle invest more than \$1 million to produce events and attractions, and to advertise all of the wonderful holiday festivities taking place in Downtown Seattle, with the intent of bringing more families from across the region to Seattle for an unmatched urban experience. This private investment supports job creation, economic opportunity and generates significant tax revenue to the City of Seattle. Continued non-permitted marches and protests that shut down streets, transit service and block access to private property, devalue the investments being made to promote Seattle -- and hampers our ability to draw visitors, as well as to create economic activity and tax revenue for important City services.

We deeply appreciate the public statements from Mayor Murray in support of peaceful protests and the rule of the law, as well as the significant additional police resources assigned by Chief O'Toole and the efforts of Assistant Chief McDonagh and Capt. Fowler the last couple weeks. We are also extremely grateful to the dedicated SPD officers who have put in long hours under stressful conditions and have conducted their work admirably as rocks, fireworks and other objects have been thrown in their direction.

We write to respectfully request 1) the development of new strategies and approaches by the City of Seattle to reduce the frequency, duration and negative impact of non-permitted marches, as highlighted in the attached verbatim comments from Downtown businesses; 2) that the amount of police overtime hours and City revenue that has been consumed by the additional demands placed on SPD by non-permitted protests be quantified; and 3) that the City clarify with street-level businesses the process for police intervention when protesters enter private property.

We are individually and collectively at the ready to lend our assistance in whatever way we can; and thank you for your efforts to uphold the rights of free speech and assembly, while preserving a safe and thriving Downtown.

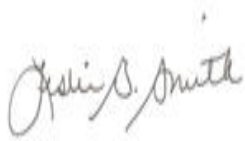
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Scholes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jon Scholes  
Downtown Seattle Association

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Tom Norwalk". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Tom Norwalk  
Visit Seattle

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leslie Smith". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Leslie Smith  
Alliance for Pioneer Square

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Watkins". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

David Watkins  
Seattle Hotel Association

## **Verbatim Comments Received from Downtown Businesses, Visitors & Residents**

*People are scared . . . our customers left and went home because they felt unsafe.*

*Customers are calling to see if it is safe to come Downtown . . . most of our scheduled clients called to cancel their appointments, which make up a significant part of our business.*

*We're worried about the protests getting violent, so we're having to order supplies to protect our windows and doors.*

*If we don't figure this out, all eastside customers will stay on the eastside – and will be closely followed by Seattle-based customers.*

*During one of the protests, our staffers had no way of getting home because the transit tunnel was closed.*

*The perception that Downtown is unsafe, is a real problem.*

*On what was supposed to be our busiest day of the year, many customers left the store and stopped shopping because they feared for their safety.*

*What are councilmembers who are endorsing protests sending to their constituents about responsible civil disobedience? It is great to have Mayor Murray and SPD involved and accountable, but I would like to see some action by the Public Safety Chair and other Councilmembers.*

*As a community member concerned with the current and progressively worsening Downtown area, I refuse to take my family to Downtown Seattle. I am fearful for their safety, and the overall experience in Downtown is disappointing. I hope that one day Downtown Seattle will be a safe place that I look forward to bringing my family, but I do not see this in the foreseeable future given the current view of the public officials.*

*I am all for freedom of speech, but when the protesters turn into rioters . . . they turn into criminals, and should be treated as such.*

*We have continued to remain inside as the streets are rough enough without demonstrations as well. As two senior citizens moving into the city for a convenient retirement location. Which has become more worrisome each year. Maybe it is time to move back into the suburbs.*

*As a lifelong Seattle resident I feel it necessary to advise someone in the business community that the current environment keeps my family from attending any type of events in the retail core. Due to the current attitudes of our city leadership and the general complacency towards the criminal element, I no longer feel safe to have my family in that area. We currently do our shopping and entertaining outside Downtown Seattle, which is a shame since we are still residents of this once beautiful city. Unfortunately, I suspect many in this area feel the same way and the once vital downtown core will soon become distant memory. I am hopeful that one day soon, these attitudes will change. We need to start putting pressure on the so-called leaders of this city to return it to the citizens.*

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*We are located in the Westlake Tower. This is my personal opinion, if they have a permit, so be it. If they don't, and especially if they damage property, they should be arrested, and prosecuted. I am tired of . . . reluctance of our courts to follow through with the consequences of breaking the law.*

*The protests have hurt our sales tremendously. We are down about 40% for our anticipated sales . . . if I didn't have to work Downtown, I most definitely would not have bothered to visit here over the weekend. I have a young daughter and wife, and I would not want them to feel threatened. I promise you many others feel the same way, and I am sure many local stores and restaurants were way down in sales as well.*

*I love the fact that people can protest and express themselves in our town, and not be harmed themselves- that's beautiful; but Friday represented a total lack of control, disregard for what is right toward our traditions and families and the consequence of leadership not doing a better job.*

*We had dinner reservations for PF Chang @ Westlake Center for tonight, which we have canceled, due to the protesters. I have sympathy for the retailers and restaurants, I will never understand our tolerance for this madness, especially at the cost of downtown business. I have worked in Downtown Seattle since 1971. I have been a resident of Seattle for the same period. Although I respect the rights of organized, legal groups to have their voices heard, I do not and will not expect conditions which create an unsafe environment for me or others who work and shop in the Downtown area. I expect unauthorized civil disorder to be dealt with to the full extent of the law . . . With the announcement that there may be another action this evening at 6pm I will have to circumvent the Downtown area in order to get home safely. The actions of a very few people are having major impact on all businesses. A co-worker on mine had planned to spend the weekend shopping downtown last Saturday after spending the night in a local hotel. Instead, they decided to drive to Bellevue where it was 'safer' to shop. I am ashamed of a city that cannot protect its citizens and businesses. I expect immediate actions which send a loud and clear message to those who have no care for safety.*

*My family of six really wanted to do the holiday Ride the Ducks on Friday and shop for Christmas gifts but there is a scheduled protest at Westlake really close to where we are supposed to leave from . . . We want to go but my children would be terrorized by the mass of protesters. I want to spend my money Downtown but were just too scared to go. Any suggestions?*

*Until you compel our elected and appointed representatives (Mayor Murray in specific) to perform their primary duty of making our streets safe from criminals and riffraff that have overtaken Downtown I will cease making ANY purchases in Downtown Seattle. Bellevue is now my destination for Christmas shopping and any other considerations. Police should be arresting anyone that is breaking our laws, that includes vagrants, "protesters", anyone who has disregard for appropriate civil behavior.*

*Regarding Westlake 'Park' and Mall, in recent years we have implored the City to stop allowing permitted or unpermitted protests there, but to no avail. Now it's much worse especially in the holiday season when the carousel and carriage rides are there for families (children). Who wants to go there now when every protest, vigil, march, etc. are there, and crime. Help.*

*I've stopped shopping completely Downtown. And I live Downtown. Not safe with the protests. I'll listen to the protestors but they have no right to block my day and make the kids scared. It makes Seattle a kid negative city. Impacts are long term. Why would I or my family want to go to Westlake center?*

*As an everyday citizen, I only see the surface of the issue - not the behind the scenes and details of the situation. All I know is that for a city that says it wants to be a world class city, it sure is going about it in an interesting way. Seattle needs strong leadership - in the council, in city hall, and in the police department. And we need it sooner rather than later.*

*With the demonstrations constantly blocking streets and intersections our Ride the Ducks vehicles have been unable to maintain an adequate route, consistent schedule, and our parking location – on multiple occasions – has been inundated by protesters and SPD officers. When dealt this hand, we have been required to provide an immediate alteration to our boarding/debarking process severely impacting our guests and staff . . . and have been forced to move our starting location from Westlake Center to our main location near Seattle Center. . . causing un-needed stress on our guests and additional training for our employees.*