

***An open letter to the City of Shoreline Planning Commission from Domenick J. Dellino  
addressing the topic of Transitional Encampments—December 12, 2016***

Dear Planning Commission:

Some of you may recall that I spoke at a previous planning commission meeting in support of minimal setbacks and encouraged the commission to adopt a generous view toward the allowance of backyard transitional encampments.

While I still STRONGLY encourage the commission and the council to take a charitable and supportive view of our city's homeless population, I no longer feel individual backyard transitional encampments are an efficient use of resources to help this vulnerable population.

On the weekend following our last meeting, I sought further information about the area homeless crisis and attended the homeless conference held by a coalition of Seattle's homeless advocates at the Seattle Central Public Library. One of the presenters was George Scarola—Mayor Murray's new appointee to head a Department of Homelessness for the Office of the Mayor. Director George Scarola advised that *individual* encampments are not the most effective solution for the homeless because such encampments tend to isolate the homeless from other services and a community where they can more readily find the resources they need to end their homelessness. Director Scarola believes in approaches that emphasize the end game—getting people BACK into permanent housing.

Therefore, after considerable research of my own on this topic, **I strongly support the amendments proposed by City Staff to the Planning Commission as found in the [Staff Report—Code Amendments for Encampments](#).**

(<http://www.shorelinewa.gov/home/showdocument?id=29809>)

Furthermore, I urge the Planning Commission to consider ***with extreme caution*** the objections of many Shoreline residents who wrongly fear helping the homeless. These residents seem to feel that anything encouraging the homeless to seek a place to stay in our city will lead to increased drug use and needles in our parks, rampant crime in our community, and the unsightly presence of poorly dressed and ill-kempt individuals on the streets. As much as they may try to disguise it, few would deny their attitudes are driven by a self-serving NIMBY mindset. We can do better!

Much of their rhetoric has been fueled by <http://safeseattle.org>—one source of much of this anti-homeless fervor. I've done considerable research on this site and its anonymous owner—Harley Lever, who has had many run-ins with the City of Seattle, and who is highly critical of anything done (or not yet done) by Mayor Murray. I'll spare you the discrediting details on Mr. Lever and his apparent motivations.

Please just beware that much of the fear of the homeless and the consequences "*they could bring to YOUR block*" comes from this site. While thinly-veiled as an advocacy organization,

SafeSeattle.org—with its emphasis on drug-related crime in the homeless community—seems to form the basis of many of our well-meaning Shoreline residents' mistrust of measures to help this most vulnerable population.

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As stated above—given the requirements of existing State Law—***I applaud the City Staff and especially the Planning Department for crafting a well-balanced set of recommendations*** that may not please everyone, but that serves to find a reasonable common ground.

I support the amendments proposed in Code Amendments for Encampments—6a - Attachment A - Dev. Code Amendments found here:

<http://www.shorelinewa.gov/home/showdocument?id=29813>

and support the Staff recommendation that the Planning Commission recommend approval to the City Council on the proposed Transitional Encampment amendments.

I'll close by saying that I believe group encampments, supported RV parks, and emergency shelters, as well as needed social services—mental health care, job training, drug addiction treatment, and food aid—will help achieve the goal of *ENDING* homelessness.

That should be our focus.

Respectfully Submitted,

—*Domenick J. Dellino, phd*—Native Seattleite and Shoreline/Innis Arden resident for 6 years

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I have been nominated by Director Scarola to serve on the annual “Count Me In” Point-In-Time Homeless census in King County on January 26<sup>th</sup> serving as a private concerned citizen. Besides helping to assess the research methodology of the effort from an anthropological perspective, I will offer to assist with recruiting volunteers to help with the count.

Those interested in learning more should contact me at [domdellino@comcast.net](mailto:domdellino@comcast.net).