

September 20, 2022

Re: SODO homeless shelter location adjacent to the CID

To the Seattle City Council,

InterIm Community Development Association has pursued the revitalization of the CID neighborhood for over 54 years, especially on behalf of the low income, limited English speaking immigrants and refugees, elders, and small businesses who are the heart and soul of the community. We hold 2 contracts with the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (Homelessness Authority), one for Diversion and one for Homelessness Prevention. Our buildings house homeless families with children and imminently homeless families and individuals. While the stated goals and values of the Homelessness Authority align very closely with our own, the Homelessness Authority is making our work much harder.

We implore the City and the Homelessness Authority to act in accordance with your stated convictions around racial equity when considering placing the colossal SODO homeless shelter next to the CID. As it stands, this scheme looks like an intentional ploy to keep the poorest people of color down, to concentrate them in one small area away from whiter more affluent areas, and to pit them against each other.

The Homelessness Authority's website lists 4 principles under the title, "What we stand for":

1. "...a hopeful, inclusive future where everyone has a safe and stable place to live." I hope you will support the CID in becoming a safe and stable place to live.
2. "Racial equity and social justice...to proactively dismantle structural racism and advance equity." How can you advance racial equity by focusing on one marginalized community, homeless people, to the exclusion of another, the CID, and when your actions are directly causing untold harm to the poorest BIPOC neighborhood in our city?
3. "Centering lived experience." Stop disregarding the lived experience of the people of the CID who have seen a dramatic decline in public safety when the large Covid 19 emergency shelter was established next door.
4. "Collaboration and partnership." Where is the collaboration and partnership with the community in which you are planning to locate the unprecedentedly large SODO homeless shelter?

The CID is struggling under the weight of historical harms due to public policies and planning rooted in structural racism. Please do not allow another poor planning decision to perpetuate structural racism and add to the burden of harms already done to the CID. Please act in accordance with yours and the Homelessness Authority's goals and convictions by taking a step back, by being inclusive, and listening to the people of the CID.

Respectfully,

Leslie Morishita
Director of Real Estate Development
Submitted on behalf of InterIm CDA