
January 9, 2014

Mayor Charlie Hales
City of Portland
1221 SW Fourth Avenue
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Mayor Hales,

Thank you for keeping us informed about your plans regarding improving the city's ability to deal with sidewalk livability issues in our Central City. We appreciate that you have said this issue is one of your priorities, and we look forward to working with you on it in the months ahead.

We were, quite honestly, very disappointed that the city will not be pursuing legislation in 2014 to clarify its ability to regulate sidewalk behavior despite earlier conversations which led us to believe otherwise. Many of our board members have spoken with you about sidewalk issues several times over the last couple of years, and we were heartened by your commitment to addressing downtown livability issues as one of your first priorities as mayor. Inclusion of this issue in the city's 2014 legislative agenda, adopted by Council in mid-December, was an important step because earlier court rulings have found that state law pre-empts some actions by the city in this area. We continue to believe that clarification of the city's authority relative to state law is important to successfully addressing the livability issue in Portland's Central City, and we hope that you will pursue a legislative strategy in the future.

In the meantime, we are concerned that there does not appear to be a plan to address the livability problems we have talked with you about several times, and we respectfully request that you clarify the steps you will take in the near term to develop and implement such a plan. As you know, problematic sidewalk behaviors have been the number one complaint of visitors, shoppers, businesses and residents in the downtown core, as well as in other neighborhoods, such as the Central Eastside. Addressing these sidewalk management issues has been a top priority of both the Alliance and Clean & Safe boards, and we were encouraged when you named it as one of your top priorities upon becoming mayor. As we did with SAFE Committee under Mayor Potter, we are committed to working with you and other leaders on a plan that both addresses the needs of individuals who require services and are willing to accept them and that protects the rights of other members of our community to have access to sidewalks free from the behaviors so frequently seen in Portland's Central City.

Specific actions we believe should be considered by you and City Council include:

- Improve the existing sidewalk ordinance to make it more effective and workable. The existing ordinance is not effective in addressing the most pressing issues related to conflicts in sidewalk use. In our view, the best ordinance was the one adopted under the SAFE Committee process because it addressed the entire width of the sidewalk and had very clear rules for appropriate sidewalk behavior. It was part of an overall package that included expanded services for people in need, we felt it was a fair and humane way to address this difficult issue. We urge the city to move to full sidewalk enforcement in high pedestrian use areas and where conflicts are most common.
- Under current code, extend the protection Council has provided City Hall to other high-traffic blocks in the downtown core. We find it ironic that Council created special rules for

sidewalks around City Hall, but, to date, has not been willing to extend those same rules to much more densely trafficked blocks in the core. We understand that Commissioner Fritz is considering extending park rules curb to curb for downtown parks, which, again, would mean special rules for sidewalks around city facilities. We hope that Council will consider how to address issues for all high-traffic areas in downtown before taking any actions that favor city properties over private businesses.

- Expand police presence. As you know, the Portland Police Bureau expanded foot patrols in the retail core during the holiday shopping period. That expanded presence was well received by both visitors and businesses and, we believe, helped ensure a safer feeling downtown during the holiday season. We hope the bureau will continue with greater foot patrols, which are a very effective deterrent to livability issues. The Clean & Safe District invests almost \$2 million per year on security in the 213-block BID district, including paying for four full-time sworn police officers. That investment has grown by some 30 percent over the last five years, as we have reduced overhead and adjusted priorities to address the livability issues downtown, and we hope the city will join us in making this an ongoing law enforcement priority.
- Enforce the laws we have. There are several state and local laws that, if applied more rigorously, could address some of the livability issues in the Central City. These include everything ranging from having zero tolerance for drug use on city sidewalks to enforcing noise and animal control ordinances more vigorously. The Clean & Safe District, for example, has for some years paid Multnomah County to have animal control officers work overtime to check on animals owned by some of our sidewalk populations. This has been highly effective in addressing concerns we have heard from downtown visitors about safety issues related to those animals. In addition, the city should enforce its existing rules against camping on a more consistent and timely basis. Rather than allowing illegal camping activities to grow and fester until they reach crisis proportions before the city acts to enforce its rules, the city should enforce the rules when camps are first starting to establish themselves so the neighboring businesses are not forced to suffer months of impact before action is taken.
- Re-examine social service offerings. There are a number of public and private entities offering services to vulnerable populations on our Central City streets. Yet, despite considerable investment in permanent housing and the opening of a day center, we continue to see people engaged in illegal camping activity. We believe it is time to examine shelter policies to see if there is sufficient capacity (compared to other cities, Portland has relatively few emergency beds per capita), and whether we are using the capacity we have most effectively. We should not accept that camping outdoors is the right option for anyone, and we should ensure that city policy supports a goal of providing shelter for everyone who needs and wants assistance. We should also examine the location of services to determine whether it continues to make sense to have such a large part of the service/shelter capacity in the downtown area.

- Make employment a priority. Clearly, we need to reconsider how we provide services for people in need. But social services, for the most part, should be viewed as a short-term solution. We should also focus on programs that help people step into jobs that will provide them long-term stability. We are very proud to partner with Central City Concern on a program that puts previously homeless people to work in supportive employment programs. Several other entities, like Transitions Projects and New Avenues for Youth, provide similar employment training and placement programs. The city should have a policy of prioritizing the hiring of these individuals wherever possible, through your own contracting and employment practices.

These are a few of the ideas we have now, but we would welcome the opportunity to engage with you and others on an overall plan that addresses social service needs while making our streets look and feel safer to visitors to our Central City. We want to reiterate that a strong, workable ordinance addressing sidewalk behavior must be part of any broader solution. We have worked on this issue for decades, and we firmly believe that the best approach leads with compassion but also includes firm rules so that our streets can be enjoyed by everyone in our community.

We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Gregg Kantor
Chair, Portland Business Alliance

Peter Andrews
Chair, Clean & Safe