

Dear Mayor Wheeler,

As you know, PDNA and I personally fully supported the establishment of the River District Navigation Center when conceived in 2018 and opened in 2019. It is our belief that solutions to our city's homelessness crisis can only happen when the private sector, communities and government all work together. The Navigation Center is an example of such a collaboration that has been able to temporarily house and service 100 people at any given time over the last five years. Although we believe the facility has been successful in helping our unhoused neighbors, we have never been provided with any set of comprehensive metrics to validate whether or not it has been successful, although we do believe without validation that it has been.

Unfortunately, there have been negative impacts imposed on the neighborhood - especially on those in the proximity of the facility - as a result of the failure of the City and County's lack of enforcement of the stipulations of the "good faith" Good Neighbor Agreement. While PDNA has been supportive of the work of the Navigation Center, we have taken pause at the prospect of the lease being extended based on the past failures to enforce the GNA and the lack of trust that a City takeover and management of the facility will be any different than what we have experienced in the past. Although, through the efforts in recent months of the Northwest Community Conservancy to keep the area clear of campers and its associated issues, it should not be a replacement for the City's responsibility to do so.

We believe that all neighborhoods must play a role in helping to solve the humanitarian crisis on our streets and that there should be more Navigation Centers, Safe Rest Villages and larger sanctioned sites such as the Clinton Triangle; however, these facilities cannot be allowed to create negative impacts on any neighborhood, which includes such things as unsanctioned camping, accumulations of trash and hazardous waste, drug dealing, prostitution, bike shops, assaults and other criminal activity. Sadly, that has been the case along Naito Parkway in the vicinity of the Navigation Center.

As you and your staff further know, some 1000 people represented by Neighbors4Safe SmartShelters have vociferously opposed the extension of the lease due to the issues mentioned above and has repeatedly asked PDNA to join them in that opposition. I and my PDNA board colleagues are deeply conflicted by the great need for such facilities, but also by the needs of neighborhood residents and businesses to feel safe and secure on our streets.

There has been discussion that if the City moves forward with managing the facility and extending the lease, it should be willing to provide a binding Good Neighbor "Contract" with consequences for noncompliance, not a "good faith" agreement that has failed in

the past. At your town hall on December 19, I publicly stated this to your staff that was present, but there has been no further communication since.

We would prefer that the community and your office could work together to accomplish a solution that will support those who are served by the Navigation Center, but with confidence that the City can give assurance that it will live up to its responsibilities to keep the neighborhood clean, safe and secure. Your office has said that things will be different this time. If that is the case, then the City should be willing to guarantee it with a binding contract.

To that end, I regret to inform you that in a near unanimous vote, the PDNA Board has voted to oppose the extension of the Navigation Center lease and in good conscience could not support the renewal in the absence of such a contract.

Sincerely,

Stan

Stan Penkin  
President, Pearl District Neighborhood Association



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