

Background

We are over seventy residents who call the Field of Dreams home. Located at 747 S. Royal Brougham Way, we live on one quarter-acre (12000 sqft) of WSDOT owned property, bordered by S. Royal Brougham Way to the north and Airport Way S., the latter defining the western and eastern boundaries of the site. The closest authorized encampment, at 2116 East Union St., is over 1.5 miles away.

We arrived here in December 2015, to escape the violence of the nearby Jungle. We were a community and operated as a loose collective.

The Field's population initially grew steadily. New residents came in large part from evictions carried out at other locations around SODO. New residents were informed—some by city officials—that the S. Royal Brougham site was not under immediate threat of eviction. Others arrived after being barred from sanctioned tent encampments.

Reavy Washington, a resident, has since the spring of 2016 made efforts to engage campers in community building and clean up efforts. Cory Potts, a community organizer, arrived to support Mr. Washington in June 2016. Mr. Potts reached out to other residents by holding weekly camp meetings where he encouraged us to discuss our concerns and evaluate our resources.

During the summer of 2016, the city designated our home as a transition site for campers leaving the Jungle. Between June and September, our numbers swelled to over 150. Many residents were concerned about the number of new faces that appeared. New arrivals often brought with them the very problems that we had attempted to flee. Yet we maintained a policy of allowing any person in need of a place to stay access to the site.

In September, some of us began attending Health and Human Services committee meetings at City Hall in order to notify the city of specific problems we were facing, especially fire hazards and unsanitary conditions, as well as to request information from the city on becoming a sanctioned encampment. One outcome of these meetings was a site visit on October 27th of Council Member Mike O'Brien. Aside from CM O'Brien's visit, our appearances at city council meetings were met with silence.

The arrival of winter saw our population decrease to around eighty residents. Those who stayed faced a difficult battle with the elements. Many residents improvised means to heat their tents. This led to fires, which consumed several tents. Mud built up. Mr. Potts and Mr. Washington responded by arranging for woodchips to be brought to the site as well as by building “the Sanctuary” in February a canvas 16x32 ft. military general-purpose tent equipped with a wood burning stove.

Between December and March, individuals and community groups began lending a hand to the residents of the Field. They built relationships with us, participated in large scale cleaning efforts and brought supplies to our community.

On February 24th, residents of the Field received advance notice from Scott Lindsay that the camp would be cleared on March 7th.

Concerns

Mr. Lindsay's e-mail cited two of the city's concerns with the Field's health and public safety.

Priorities among the health concerns were threats posed by the build up of waste, some of it bio-medical, as well as a rat infestation. Public safety concerns were primarily criminal, especially sex offenses involving minors.

Response

We, the residents of the Field would like to continue occupying the site at 747 S. Royal Brougham Way. We insist on being given a week-long stay of eviction in order to give the city council and Mayor's office time to respond to this proposal.

We recognize the urgency of concerns raised by Mr. Lindsay and understand that our current form of governance falls short of the city's expectations for sanctioned encampments (SMC 23.42.056). We ask for an opportunity to address those concerns in order to:

- a. Continue occupying the site and helping residents find housing;
- b. Demonstrate that despite being homeless, we are capable of working with the city to improve ourselves and our immediate environment;
- c. Remain a resource for individuals who, either due to their lifestyle or substance abuse, are unable to maintain residence in a sanctioned encampment or high-barrier shelter;

One reason we seek to maintain our existing community at the Field is that we feel that removal and relocation does not end the problems that challenge our community; it multiplies them and kicks the can down the road. The circumstances leading to the issues Mr. Lindsay identified will be reproduced elsewhere; confronting them *in situ*, assisted by resident leadership—and the city—is more likely to succeed than dispersing us.

Next steps

In response to Mr. Lindsay's e-mail, residents met three times in the course of ten days and decided to undertake the following steps. Implementation of these steps will occur over a three-month period.

Residents will establish intermediate benchmarks that will reflect an ongoing commitment to making progress in all the following areas of actions.

Residents understand that failure to meet benchmarks will result in our eviction from the Field of Dreams. Residents ask to be able to designate a city-approved auditor who will assess whether benchmarks are met and communicate that assessment to city officials. The auditor will also evaluate whether the city is upholding its responsibility to its homeless residents (outreach, fire prevention, public safety and protection from discrimination).

Public Safety

In as strong as terms possible, residents condemn the sexual exploitation of minors, at home and anywhere in the city.

Since this past summer, criminality in the camp has in fact decreased. Residents attest that crime rates at the site have fallen. This is due in part to fewer new arrivals but also due to the weather: winter conditions tend to reduce criminality. Attacking root causes of crime now will prevent another spike.

To address public safety, residents will:

- a. Send delegations to sanctioned encampments in order to study their strategies for reducing and preventing crime;
- b. Install public lighting throughout the camp; initially, lights will be solar-powered LEDs, placed at 10 foot intervals along the three legs of the triangle (est. cost \$300); going forward, campers would like to place electrical splints into the light poles 801 illuminating S. Royal Brougham Way;
- c. Install two public telephones connected to the city's Navigation Team, who will receive and respond to resident complaints;

- d. Host bi-monthly workshops in the Sanctuary related to sexual health, sex trafficking and domestic violence open to residents and the SODO homeless community;
- e. Invite a security liaison from outside the camp to hold weekly office hours in the Sanctuary in order to link up the camps security committee and the city's Navigation Team;
- f. Establish four fire prevention posts equipped with fire suppressant materials and general alarms (est. cost \$300);
- g. Build personal storage lockers connected with the Sanctuary in order to deter theft;
- h. Construct screening around the entirety of the Field's perimeter.

Health and Sanitation

The factors contributing to poor health and a lack of cleanliness at the Field include the lack of immediate access to water, lack of hygiene and laundry facilities, an infestation of rats due to the buildup of trash and the widespread use of pallets as tent platforms, poorly maintained portable toilets and buildup of large debris.

The act of abandoning personal tents accounts for perhaps 50% of the above problems. It is important to note that the ability to change locations within the site in fact contributes to public safety. Yet there must be consequences to burdening neighbors with one's own waste.

Significant health and sanitation improvements can be achieved by:

- a. Over the next two months, in coordination with volunteers, holding weekly cleaning events focused on large debris and abandoned tents;
- b. Evicting residents who abandon tents and do not remove debris from former sites;
- c. Tripling, for two months, the current number of commercial size dumpsters in order to remove abandoned property; additionally, residents agree to empty every three days intermediate trash bins, as well as a trash bin in the Sanctuary;

- d. Providing access, in the near term, to non-potable water through the use of refillable 200gal water bladders mounted to trailers, which volunteers will deliver to the Field and refill weekly; these bladders will be connected to portable sinks (est. cost \$400);
- e. Erecting platforms for living and storage tents at least one foot off the ground in order to prevent rat nesting (est. cost \$1400);
- f. Place rat traps and natural rat deterrents such as mint, lime and rosemary beneath tent platforms (est. cost \$375);
- g. In the long term, we would like access to the water pumped into fire hydrants on the overpass connecting I-90 and I-5; we would like to construct a hygiene center below the fire hydrant that evacuates waste water into sewer access point on the northeastern side of the site;

Governance

Beginning in June 2016, weekly camp council meetings were held to discuss residents' concerns and identify common problems. The decision to appear at city council meetings, the acquisition of resources like wood-burning stoves and the community tent, grew out of the camp council meetings.

Governance at the camp remains loose due to the absence, until recently, of a community meeting space, lack of experience with collective management and the lack of community resources in the camp that require collective management.

We understand that external volunteers who help with camp operations are crucial to establishing a governing board. With their assistance, we will:

- a. Within two weeks, identify candidates from among campers and external supporters who will sit on a governing council with the understanding that this group will prepare incorporation articles for a non-profit corporation;
- b. Members of the council will be elected at a meeting of residents announced at least one week prior; election of members to the

council will be determined by a vote of simple majority of residents present;

- c. Council members will have the power to receive complaints related to public health, safety and criminality, to investigate complaints and propose solutions to residents, which, if approved, the council will have the authority to implement;
- d. Within one month, submit articles of incorporation to the secretary of state;
- e. The council will notify the surrounding business of the need to form a Community Advisory Committee. Possible members of the CAC are Metro's Atlantic Base, Seattle's Bridge and Maintenance Facility, Seattle Injector Business, BMW Seattle, the Greyhound Station on S. Royal Brougham and Sixth Ave, the Shell gas station on Dearborn and 6th Ave S and the Inscape Arts and Cultural Center. Many of these stakeholders already maintain contact with us and provide us with informal services. Constituting a CAC will streamline access to some of those resources;
- f. Eventually, the Field's governing council will oversee admission and evictions.

It is important to note that residents at the Field aspire to a unique form of governance. As previously mentioned, many of us arrived at the Field after being barred from a sanctioned encampment. Being barred leads residents to mistrust environments structured around an abundance of rules.

The model we aspire to implement is an incremental one that can evolve as needed. Rather than imposing a full menu of rules at once, we feel that the rules must first grow roots. All residents recognize that there must be minimum standards in our community, especially concerning public health and safety. Yet rules concerning personal conduct, as well as expectations for participation in camp governance, will initially be different in community areas than those governing private residences.

By focusing on community areas, rather than one another, residents will acquire self-governing skills. We will participate in rule making

before submitting to them, which will ensure a higher rate of adhesion and consensus.

Service provision

Due to our current status—the Field combines features of sanctioned and unsanctioned camps—provision of outreach services has been intermittent. Since Mr. Lindsay’s announcement of an eviction, outreach workers from Evergreen Treatment Services and the Union Gospel Mission have begun making frequent visits to the site.

Parallel to UGM and REACH’s efforts, a ten person volunteer pool will act as temporary stand-ins for service providers. Their role over the next month will be to staff office hours in the community tent, listen to residents’ service concerns and seek out mental, physical and dental health providers, social workers, substance abuse counselors and female health and wellness counselors who will eventually replace volunteers and be reimbursed by the non-profit corporation.

Residents have chosen an office-hours model for two reasons. First, it allows service providers to get to know residents at a pace that residents are comfortable with, which ensures that residents and service providers build trusting relationships. Second, it makes service providers available to a wider community than the one in the Sanctuary’s immediate vicinity.

Closing

We, the residents of the Field of Dreams, greatly appreciate your taking the time to review and respond to our proposal. You may contact us at info@ourfieldofdreams.org, or in person at 747 S. Royal Brougham Way.