



INTERIM CDA

InterIm Community
Development Association

Mayor Durkan
600 4th Avenue
4th Floor
Seattle, WA , 98104

Dear Mayor Durkan, Director Mantilla, Council President Gonzalez, and members of the Seattle City Council

The Chinatown-International District (CID) is the oldest existing ethnic neighborhood left in Seattle. Working with property owners, business owners, district employees, and most importantly, neighborhood residents, our community service agencies have worked to keep the CID a vibrant and safe neighborhood for all. That work has continued during this crisis.

We are seeking the closure of the unregulated homeless encampment that has taken root on South King Street in the CID and ask that the City work with its inhabitants to find safe and healthy shelter or permanent housing. Also, we ask for continued monitoring of the area to ensure a similar situation does not arise again. The encampment and a potential sanitation station at S King and 10th Ave South pose devastating compounding effects on the CID's already fragile residents, livability, and economic recovery. Unregulated encampments pose a threat to the CID that is not felt in other neighborhoods, and this threat is compounded by the COVID-19 threat.

Our organizations have been working to address the needs of the community during the COVID-19 crisis. This includes services such as the delivery of hot meals and groceries, drive through testing for COVID-19, funding small business relief, wellness checks for elders, and much more. The need for services we were already providing, including safe and stable housing, community building, community advocacy, and the dissemination of government documents and rules is increasing as this crisis goes on.

As we try to see our community through this crisis, we are facing a growing public safety, public health threat, and economic vitality crisis due to this unregulated encampment. In the past, we have co-existed with established, regulated, encampments like Nickelsville. Many of our services reach unsheltered or formerly unsheltered people. We all worry about the elders and children who pass by the encampment and see open air drug use, and the residents of buildings who heard the shooting that happened at the encampment a couple of weeks ago. These new unregulated tents make the work the CID BIA does in the public safety arena more difficult. The encampment also poses a risk through the spread of COVID-19 and Hepatitis A. Our neighborhood is highly vulnerable due to both our density and the large amount of housing for the elderly. This situation makes the work the staff of ICHS, SCIDpda, InterIm CDA, and others do to protect residents from COVID-19 that much harder. We fear the harm an outbreak could bring for all the residents, workers, visitors, and businesspeople.

They will also hamper economic recovery in the neighborhood and cause additional stress through the criminal incidents that has been reported on our streets. Our neighborhood is deeply affected by racism and a perception of sickness that is rooted in anti-Asian stereotypes. The businesses in the neighborhood were some of the first to suffer from a loss of customers even before the state issues stay-at-home orders. A joint community development initiative by SCIDpda, the CID BIA, and Friends of Little Saigon seeks to mitigate this situation. Within the CID, those who have lost their job due to this crisis are being helped by InterIm. Many other organizations and people are contributing to mitigating the economic harm to our neighborhood in many ways. The addition of both the sanitation station and an encampment being to the side of one of the main streets in the neighborhood just puts more of a barrier in front of recovery by discouraging customers.

As a first step in recognizing our current situation, we urge the immediate closure of the unregulated homeless camp in the Chinatown International District along South King street. The City should remove these individuals and work with them to find an alternative safe and healthy place to stay at. Furthermore, the city should provide them with the services for a healthy and safe life. The City should additionally conduct a major clean-up of these areas, including the disposal of garbage and storage of unclaimed property, restoration of damaged properties, and disinfecting areas that have been utilized as open restrooms. Then, the city must continue to monitor the sites and ensure another camp does not arise. Next, the city must halt any plan to locate a sanitation station at South King and 10th ave South.

Finally, we would like to express our disappointment that our community has had to come to the city on these issues. Our neighborhoods density and vulnerability are not new, and so the city should have been very alert for any sign of an encampment forming and taken swift action to help the unhoused as well as our community. We expect for these concerns to be addressed swiftly.

Thank you so much for all you do for our community, and we expect to hear from you soon.

Best,

InterIm CDA

The Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience

International Community Health Services

APICAT for Health

Kin On

Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority

CID Business Improvement Area

Chinese Information and Service Center

Friends of Little Saigon

