

Presentation to Shoreline City Council  
November 7, 2016

My name is Pam Cross and I live in Shoreline.

What I want to talk about today is how we started towards a goal of helping the homeless and lost our way in the process.

The initial plan was to simplify and streamline the permitting process for homeless encampments at churches and other non-profit organizations.

But this plan was expanded to allow any Shoreline resident to host an encampment in their backyard. This is a quantum leap from simplifying the permitting process.

And this is where we got off track.

In the interest of transparency I will state that, unlike Brad Lancaster, I am not an attorney and do not have a law office in Shoreline. I am a recently retired commercial insurance wholesale broker.

I would hazard to say that the majority of Shoreline residents favor the use of property owned by churches and other non-profits for temporary housing of the homeless. Some, if not in favor initially, have grown accustomed to their existence.

And I will also suggest that the majority of Shoreline residents do NOT favor the use of their next-door neighbor's property as a homeless encampment.

From local forums, planning commission meetings, and comments to the city council, it is clear that if a person does not favor backyard encampments, that person will be blatantly accused of:

- Outright Hostility
- Fear and Ignorance of people who have lost their housing
- Racism
- Exercising White Privilege
- NIMBY
- Practicing an inferior religion
- Being Anti-Religion and Anti-Constitution

Kim Lancaster reported there was an intense atmosphere of hostility at the 10/20 public meeting of the planning commission. Stating practical considerations for health, safety, training, and control is not hostility — but rather the start of a healthy dialogue.

She stated this alleged hostility was “based on fear and lack of knowledge of transitional encampments.” This statement is not borne out by the comments of the speakers who outlined real life concerns for the occupants, the neighbors, and the resident host. Identifying potential problems is a necessary part of any process. Some suggested the idea be tried and, if there is a problem, the policy can be changed. I think we all know about Portland's attempt to open select areas for overnight camping that quickly became 24/7 camping throughout the city. Portland is still trying to put that genie back in the bottle.

It is possible that the person who brought up racism and white superiority is unfamiliar with many Shoreline neighborhoods. This needless name calling does not warrant a response.

Not In My Back Yard was first coined for larger projects located in a general neighborhood. For example, most people prefer a transfer station be located in an industrial or commercial area due to increased traffic, noise and the size of the station. Likewise, most people prefer wastewater treatment plants be placed in an industrial area due to noise, odors and size. NIMN (not in my neighborhood) doesn't have the same catchy appeal as NIMBY, so NIMBY it became. However, this proposal is **quite literally In My Back Yard**. There is approximately 10' between houses in my neighborhood, and with a zero setback as requested by the Lancasters, the neighbor's encampment will be inches from my patio. Sounds and smells do not respect fences making my backyard a de facto part of the encampment. Additionally, Shoreline is hilly so that a backyard is often on a lower level than the house, and two story homes are common. Even with a tall fence, the neighbor will look directly down on the encampment. This is visually intrusive to the occupants as well as the neighbors.

The comment was made that Shoreline should not want to invite Constitutional rights litigation, or become a symbol for religious discrimination.

We all, each and every one of us, are protected by the US Constitution including Freedom of Religion. We are equally protected. One's religious preference is not superior to another's. There is nothing in the Constitution stating you can infringe on another's rights by claiming your religious views are somehow more righteous.

If you practice your faith by ministering to the homeless, you are able to do this in various ways. You can assist at a church encampment, collect and distribute blankets, coats, personal hygiene products and food. Provide transportation, or invite occupants into your home to share a meal or watch a sporting event on your large screen tv. Assist them in searching for work by helping with a resume. Help them develop realistic expectations if they are young. Be an advocate for the individuals you make contact with. And listen. These activities may not get you on TV or written up in the newspaper but they should be part of your faith's mission.

All of these activities and many more are available to you right now without infringing on a neighbor's rights to experience their faith in their own way. Their faith may involve meditation, yoga exercises performed in the natural setting of their backyard, reading inspirational books or private meetings to discuss matters of faith.

We live in a free society where everyone's opinion is equal and everyone shares the same constitutional rights.

We are not superior to the people who have lost their homes.

And you are not superior to the people who want to retain peace on the land they call home.

Thank you.