



Mayor Lisa Brown

October 24, 2025

Dear City Council President Wilkerson and Members of the City Council,

Thank you for your partnership and support of our "all of the above" approach to housing instability and the homelessness crisis. Under the H.O.M.E. Starts Here initiative, our investments in coordinated street outreach, scattered site shelter, the housing navigation center, and more are already making an impact.

The Administration's proposed modifications to the obstruction and unauthorized camping ordinance complement the City's overarching plan. The ordinance we have put forward for Council consideration builds on existing policy in a number of key ways:

- Effective citywide;
- Gives officers more discretion;
- Simple and straightforward to enforce; and
- Continues to emphasize engagement and navigation to resources

This afternoon, Council staff filed an alternate version to be discussed at the Public Safety Committee meeting on Monday. We have three significant concerns with the alternate proposal as written:

1. **Broad Definitions:** The alternate proposal's definition of 'Obstruct' is overly broad, which creates enforcement challenges for our Spokane Police Officers due to a lack of clarity of what constitutes compliance. We ask that you instead retain the Administration's proposed definition of 'Obstruct' that was approved by the City Prosecutor.
2. **Transit Facilities:** Washington's Unlawful Transit Conduct law (RCW 9A.025) – in addition to the rest of the criminal code – is sufficient to address any conduct or behavior at transit facilities. Adding "transit facility or station" to the definition of 'Right-of-Way' for the purpose of this ordinance is beyond the scope of this ordinance. The Administration's proposal includes "transit stops" in the definition of 'Right-of-Way', which provides sufficient clarity.
3. **Enforcement of Tree Regulations:** Currently, damage to a tree is a civil infraction that is addressed by our Urban Forestry team in coordination with Park Rangers and Code Enforcement. The alternate proposal would make it a misdemeanor, removing it from the jurisdiction of Parks and Recreation entirely and instead making it an issue for Spokane Police Officers. This proposed change will significantly curtail enforcement, as it is not

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an efficient or appropriate use of Spokane Police Officer time and resources, particularly when our other teams are already equipped and authorized to do this work.

This ordinance is just one tool in our toolbox. It is a crucial part of our "all of the above" approach, but it cannot solve all of our challenges.

We are supportive of – and have incorporated – many revisions from the Council workgroup's proposal, including Councilmember Cathcart's original language regarding existing "no camping" signage and notices being sufficient to avoid additional redundant notice, and language about notice not being required when camping activity blocks ingress or egress to private property or businesses.

Thank you for your continued collaboration as we work together to create a more responsive and effective system for our community.

Respectfully,

Mayor Lisa Brown and Police Chief Kevin Hall

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