



**CITY OF KIRKLAND**

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**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Dave Ramsay, City Manager

**From:** Eric Olsen, Police Chief

**Date:** April 7, 2008

**Subject:** Draft Response Letter to Gale Clement RE: Teen Activity at Peter Kirk Park

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council authorize Mayor James Lauinger to sign a letter as presented or modified responding to Ms. Gale Clement.

**BACKGROUND:**

On March 30, 2008, a letter (Attachment 1) was received at the City, addressed to the Kirkland City Council, and authored by Ms. Gale Clement. In the letter, Ms. Clement expresses concerns regarding teen activity at Peter Kirk Park and surrounding areas.

For the City Council consideration is the draft response letter to Ms. Clement (Attachment 2)

Attachment 1: Letter from Gale Clement, 3/30/08

Attachment 2: Draft City Council Response

Gale Clement  
10512 128th Avenue NE, Kirkland, WA 98033

March 30, 2008

Kirkland City Council  
Kirkland City Hall  
123—5th Avenue  
Kirkland, WA

Dear City Council Members:

I am a resident of North Rose Hill. I frequently ride the bus to downtown Kirkland and use the Kirkland Transit Center. I am writing to express some concerns and share some observations.

There is a worsening problem with teens/young adults using the transit center as a hang-out. At times, the various activities in which they engage have rendered the area unpleasant, uncomfortable, and even unsafe. The hanging out is most evident immediately after school (approx between 3pm and 5pm), and on weekend and summer evenings; it seems to be worse when the weather is nice. Not all the teens who hang at the center are Kirkland kids—according to one Metro driver, teens come in from Seattle on the express buses to deal drugs. (Another Metro driver, a Kirkland resident, refers to the KTUB as the "Teen Drug Center.")

The problems:

- \*General loitering. Using the transit center as a hang-out, rather than a place to wait for a bus.
- \*Smoking. In and around the bus stops/bus shelters, and undercover at the library entrance.
- \*Spitting. It's a little weird how prevalent this seems to be.
- \*Profanity
- \*Inappropriate physical contact
- \*Blocking the entryway to the public restroom. Sitting on the water fountain, etc.
- \*Pan handling
- \*Drug dealing

I called the city to express my concerns and was referred to the Kirkland Police Department. The operator at the Police Department took a report and told me that the PD was aware of the drug activity and had been using undercover officers.

I am concerned about the future of downtown and how, if left unchecked, this sort of activity will affect our city, downtown property values, and downtown businesses. Last summer, my husband and I were considering a move to one of the downtown high-rises. One significant reason that we decided against the move was the negative atmosphere and activities at Peter Kirk park and at the transit center.

I am also concerned about how this sort of activity/atmosphere will discourage people from using the buses and encourage them to continue driving around town safely locked inside their SUVs, regardless of traffic congestion, gas prices, and environmental impact.

I hope the council will consider ways to address this problem as it works on the plan for the new transit center. Personally, I would like to see the routine assignment of uniformed police officers *on foot* at the

park and at the transit center. Even better would be a mini-police station at the location. I would also appreciate a smoke-free environment in which to wait for my bus (the tiny signs posted on the metro shelters aren't effective).

I should clarify that I am aware that our city is made up of a diverse population, and I don't object to these young people because of their face jewelry or unusual clothing. I also realize that teens, when they behave within acceptable civil parameters are entitled to use and enjoy Kirkland's public spaces. But I do object to the behaviors which have caused me to avoid and limit my own use of these same spaces.

Sincerely,



Gale Clement

Gale Clement  
10512 128th Ave NE  
Kirkland WA 98033

**DRAFT**

April 15, 2008

Dear Mrs. Clement,

Thank for your recent letter to the City Council regarding concerns about teens at Peter Kirk Park, the Kirkland Teen Union Building (KTUB) and the Downtown Kirkland Transit Center. Your thoughts are appreciated. I hope the following provides you with information you may not have known and answers some of you concerns.

The central location of Peter Kirk Park, with its amenities such as the pool, teen center, and playfields, is no doubt a popular place for families and teens. The family atmosphere is further complimented with the King County Library, Kirkland Performance Center, shops and restaurants. As you must know through your transit commuting, the Downtown Kirkland Transit Center provides regional bus service.

I appreciate that you are observant of the activities happening in this downtown hub. I've learned from the Police Department that the vast majority of teens and young adults using the park do not cause problems and are using the facilities legally and respectfully. This is not to say there are not those who have disregard for public property, and even the law.

Please know that throughout the year the Police Department conducts a number of emphasis patrols around the park and surrounding areas. An officer from each of our Operations Division patrol squads is assigned to conduct foot patrols. Increased patrols are annually conducted during the summer months and officers are assigned to evening and weekend shifts. Oftentimes, officers work in partnership with the City's Youth Services, Parks Maintenance staff, and Friends of Youth, the agency that manages KTUB.

As you may be aware, the Kirkland Library offers public parking. Throughout the year, the garage is patrolled at all hours of the day and night by patrol officers and is a regular checkpoint for our parking enforcement officer who will report unlawful activities, beyond parking violations.

Over the years, these coordinated efforts have led to a several arrests and to a number of people receiving trespass warning letters prohibiting their return to the park. Drug and alcohol laws are strictly enforced and violations of these laws accounted for many of the arrests.

I'd like to address your concern about increased teen presence between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. The Lake Washington School District utilizes King County Metro buses to transport students around the

district in order to reduce school bus trips and for other programs. The buses frequently drop students at the Transit Center for transfers to other areas of the district, which increases the overall number of school-aged riders at that time of day. The smoking issue you cited will be discussed with representatives from King County Metro and Sound Transit.

Another issue your letter mentions regards pan handling. The City currently does not have an ordinance that prohibits aggressive panhandling.

As you may know, the City Council and staff, including the Police Department, have been actively participating in the proposed improvements to the Transit Center. A key design theme of “eyes on the street” has been a vital component to the project design. Proposed improvements are intended to eliminate “dark spots” that exist now, to enhance lighting and to open up the area more.

I am confident the City is applying the public safety resources necessary to monitor the activities in and around Peter Kirk Park. The Police Department can best effectively respond to issues when they are reported immediately. I encourage you to call 911 should you observe what you believe is suspicious or unlawful behavior.

Thank you for sharing your concerns with the Kirkland City Council. Should you wish to discuss your concerns further, I ask that you contact Captain Rex Caldwell at 425-587-3404.

Sincerely,  
KIRKLAND CITY COUNCIL

James L. Lauinger  
Mayor