

June 16, 2010

Christopher Williams
Acting Superintendent
Seattle Parks and Recreation
100 Dexter Avenue North
Seattle, Washington 98109-5199

Dear Mr. Williams:

As Downtown residents, business owners, employees and members of the Center City Parks Task Force Follow-up Committee, we would like to express our support for continuation and expansion of the Park Ranger Program. While we realize that you are facing a huge budget challenge, we feel this is a crucial investment that saves the tax payers public safety dollars in the long run.

The Park Ranger program is a wonderful tool that provides a consistent presence in our downtown parks for which the Seattle Police Department (SPD) doesn't have the time or resources. Having Rangers in our parks has improved the real and perceived safety for our downtown park users. We have all witnessed the Rangers on numerous occasions managing and diffusing aggressive behavior through creative and respectful interactions with park patrons. The rangers have developed unique relationships with many of Seattle's fragile population whom often spend their days and nights in our City parks, and also serve as a point of contact for tourists and other visitors to our city.

We would like to give you a few examples of situations where the Park Rangers response has been invaluable in diffusing dangerous situations in our parks. Last Friday a fight broke out in Denny Park over alcohol. An individual was being beaten and the assailant had just pulled out a knife. Due to the quick response of a Park Ranger, the attack was halted, the assailant was separated from the victim, and SPD and emergency respondents were able to arrive shortly thereafter. Had the Ranger not arrived when he did, the victim could have been killed. In another example, earlier this spring Rangers intervened in a volatile situation between baseball and soccer players at Cal Anderson, averting a 911 call to SPD. Also this year our Rangers were on patrol in Waterfront Park when flagged down by a grounds employee who stumbled across a gentleman who had cut his wrists and arms in a suicide attempt. The Rangers secured the scene and performed first aid until the Seattle Fire Dept. arrived.

Having Ranger presence in our parks has helped to form relationships with our patrons. They can often respond quickly to avert bigger problems, since they are already often either in the park or in the general area. Their knowledge, presence, friendliness and contacts to public service agencies make them a wonderful addition to the downtown area. Rangers have even been spotted spending time with groups of children in the parks, passing out Jr. Ranger Stickers and answering questions that only 5 and 6 year olds can ask.

Rangers have helped Parks build better and more effective partnerships with the Metropolitan Improvement District (MID) clean and safe program, the Seattle Police Department and community groups. Having them out in the park system daily vastly increases the capacity of the Parks Security Office and enables Parks to have more of a presence in downtown park spaces. Having the Park Rangers in the parks is clearly making a difference in our community. We would encourage you to look at expanding the park ranger program so that more parks can benefit from this invaluable program.

Sincerely,



Richard Nordstrom on behalf of
Center City Parks Task Force Follow-up Committee
President, Belltown Community Council



Lynn Claudon on behalf of
Center City Parks Task Force Follow-up Committee
Pioneer Square Resident

Other members of the Center City Parks Task Force Follow-up Committee include:

- Ashanti Bitar of the Pine Street Group and Friends of Westlake Park;
- Joyce Pisanont of the Chinatown/ID;
- Kate Joncas from the Downtown Seattle Association;
- Susan Jones, an architect and downtown resident;
- Stephanie Pure from the AIA;
- David Brewster from the Freeway Park Neighborhood Association;
- Jackie Ramels and Diana Kincaid from the Board of Park Commissioners; and

Cc: Councilmember Sally Bagshaw