# AIA Seattle

February 1, 2024

Dear City Attorney Davison, Mayor Harrell, and Councilmembers,

AIA Seattle is a membership organization with 2600+ members dedicated to a vision for equitable, resilient, thriving communities. AIA Seattle believes everyone has a fundamental human right to housing, and that livable cities require increased density, enhanced mobility, alternative forms of housing and funding for affordable and subsidized housing of all types. The City should be focused on solutions for housing and not on furthering unproductive and punitive policies towards people experiencing homelessness. Resources should be deployed for effective and human rights focused solutions.

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The City's position expressed by City Attorney Davison's signing as *amici curiae* a brief in support of the petitioner City of Grants Pass[1], requesting the US Supreme Court overturn rulings in *Martin* and *Johnson* is counter to upstream solutions required to recognize the fundamental human right of housing. The City of Seattle should allow individuals to take shelter on public land when no alternative living arrangements can be made available to them. Studies show that encampment sweeps are counterproductive, costly, and harmful, and only cause more harm to those living outside and our communities.[2]

AIA Seattle implores City of Seattle to focus on solutions to our community's urgent housing crisis rather than disregard the rights of people experiencing homelessness. The City should adopt a comprehensive plan which:

- Reevaluates Seattle's growth strategy to end exclusionary zoning and add housing capacity everywhere
- Speeds up housing production by addressing process bottlenecks and supporting more housing types
- Addresses city design challenges by lessening code requirements which prohibit development

Instead of pursuing permission for policies which are counter to human rights, the City of Seattle should enact policies and regulations to increase the availability of all types of housing, including:
- Increased funding for low income and affordable housing through public and market mechanisms
- Expanded housing options for people experiencing homelessness, which includes tiny house villages, as well as protecting individuals who are living in their vehicles by establishing additional criteria for City seizure of vehicles that are being inhabited lawfully.
- Smart land use to maximize housing such as a comprehensive framework for how surplus public land is used to prioritize affordable housing among a range of uses, such as through the Seattle Social Housing Developer

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[1] Brief in support of petitioner available at https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/23/23-175/280374/20230925135328591_IMLA%20Amicus%20Brief%20FINAL%20DRAFT.pdf
brief refers to *Martin v. City of Boise, 920 F.3d 584 (9th Cir. 2019) and Johnson v. City of Grants Pass, 72 F.4th 868 (9th Cir. 2023)*

[2] "Impact of Encampment Sweeps on People Experiencing Homelessness", National Healthcare for the Homeless Council, pg. 3, https://nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/NHCHC-encampment-sweeps-issue-brief-12-22.pdf

- A 'housing first' approach which offers people experiencing homelessness permanent housing without preconditions, behavioral contingencies, or barriers

Our members are community problem solvers who expect thoughtful, results-driven policies rather than the anti-human rights stance put forward in the brief to request the Supreme Court overrule *Martin* and *Johnson*. We implore the City to adopt a comprehensive plan, policies, and regulations to increase availability of all types of housing.

Sincerely,

AIA Seattle Committee on Homelessness

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