

Report on Initial Outreach Interviews

Purpose

The Keller Group began the community outreach process for the Seattle Municipal Jail project with 50 interviews of neighborhood and community leaders around Seattle. The purpose of these interviews was twofold: to begin to brief some of Seattle’s community leaders about the need to build a Municipal Jail, and to surface questions and concerns which they had and which the City might hear throughout the community outreach process.

Methodology

Three members of the Keller Group team conducted the interviews. We contacted community leaders by phone or email, briefly described the issue, and asked for an appointment. We conducted all but two of these interviews in person; the others were conducted by phone. Most interviews were between 30 and 60 minutes in length. We conducted the interview as a conversation intended to solicit as many concerns, questions, and ideas as possible, while briefing people on the need for a new jail and answering questions when possible. See Appendix A for the interview protocol. We also provided interviewees with a one-page summary of the issue, Appendix B. The interviews took place in April and May of 2008, prior to the announcement of potential jail sites. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, coded by constituency, and identifying information removed. We then conducted a simple content analysis in order to summarize the questions and comments we heard.

Who we interviewed

We interviewed 50 community members and business leaders from across all parts of the City, see Appendix C. In addition to the 50 we interviewed, there were 23 people we contacted who did not respond, declined, or whose schedule didn’t fit into our timeframe. We interviewed people from the following constituencies (the number does not equal 50 as some people were included in more than one constituency):

Constituency	Number of interviewees
Neighborhoods	17
Human Services	17
Business	10
Philanthropy	6
Faith Communities	4
Legal	2

For our purposes, “human services” includes social services, health, and education. “Business” includes business and commercial, labor, and service or networking groups.

We did not include environmental groups in the initial round of interviews. The outreach around environmental concerns will take place when potential sites are announced and the SEPA process is initiated, so that the outreach and feedback can be specific to particular sites.

The interviewees provided initial reactions, questions, comments, and concerns to the issue of building a municipal jail for misdemeanor inmates. They were speaking without necessarily having much preparation on the issues, but rather from their general expertise and experience. We also did not ask interviewees to speak for their group or organization. Several interviewees emphasized the fact that they were responding with their own questions and concerns, and could not at this point speak for their groups or organizations. The information we collected is in no way generalizable to the general public or any segment of the public; it is simply a collection of questions and concerns that were raised by these 50 people that may provide some insight on issues the City is likely to hear as the process unfolds. It is important to note that additional concerns and questions are likely to come up as well.

There will also be site-specific concerns and questions once potential sites are identified. Because potential sites had not yet been identified and because we were interviewing people from across the City, we did not hear site- or neighborhood-specific issues and concerns; consequently, we did not break out our analysis by geography.

What We Heard

See the following tables for a summary of the issues we heard and the constituencies from whom we heard it. The first table includes themes that came up most often, consistently across interviewees and constituencies. The second table includes comments, questions, and ideas that came up less often and from particular constituencies.

Community Outreach

In the course of these interviews, some community leaders offered advice on reaching out to the public. Their suggestions included:

- Use community leaders and existing groups to educate and do outreach; orient and train community leaders on the issue so they can help you. Work with leaders and groups to establish trust; if the messages just come from the City it will be hard for people to trust.
- Be clear in your outreach whether you're really asking for feedback to influence the decision or not; don't ask for input on options if the decision has already been made or if it won't make a difference.
- Be sure to understand the history and context of a neighborhood; what else has happened to a neighborhood; how have they responded; what has been controversial.
- Do public outreach as early as you can.
- Think about what you name it. Consider things like "detention center," "crisis center," rather than "jail."
- Be sure to have materials and meetings in Spanish and other languages.

What we heard most often....	Neighborhood	Human Services	Philanthropy	Business	Legal	Faith
Why can't we reduce the number of people in jail further? The misdemeanor population includes many homeless and mentally ill people who need services. This is not a good way to spend money; services and prevention are less expensive than incarceration. We need to do more with prevention, diversion, alternate sentencing, and rehabilitation.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Do not locate it near residences, schools, daycares, parks, playfields, and community centers. Put it someplace industrial.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Think about the perception issues, especially if it's in the South, in an area with more people of color, or people of lower income. Think about the message it will send. What will be the impact on community pride, or on vulnerable or fragile communities that already have problems, or who don't have as much time and resources to organize and participate in the process as other neighborhoods, or who don't have the same political capital.	✓	✓			✓	
Consider traffic impact. Think about the environmental impact of increased number of trips between a jail and courts. This will make it harder to get around or in and out of the area. Make sure the site has adequate transit. Increased traffic means increased noise. This can impact safety on the bus if that's how misdemeanants are leaving.	✓			✓	✓	
Put it downtown to be near human services, courts, medical services, attorneys, and police. Putting it outside of downtown means more officer time off the streets. People who choose to live downtown know they're going to be near a mix of uses. A downtown jail would be more secure.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Be prepared to do a lot of education about the issues, including the difference between misdemeanors and felonies.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
How will the City keep a neighborhood safe on release? Will offenders be released right out the front door? At all hours? How will they be transported away from the area? What if they don't leave the area?	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
This is an opportunity to coordinate (co-locate, referral, contract) with human services during stay and on release.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Make the design of the building fit the surrounding area. Will it be a green building? Be creative and innovative in the appearance of the building. Don't make it look like a prison.	✓	✓	✓	✓		
How will the city invest in the neighborhood where it's sited? (Development; revitalization; mitigation; trade-off; replacement)	✓	✓			✓	

Other questions and concerns we heard...	Neighborhood	Human Services	Philanthropy	Business	Legal	Faith
Why so big? Why low rise? Why one big facility and not a few small ones, co-located with precincts or services? The Mayor is pushing density in everything else; this contradicts that message. Don't make it so big: "If you build it they will fill it"	✓	✓		✓		
People are going to be concerned about their property values.	✓	✓	✓			✓
We need to address the disproportionality of people of color who are incarcerated.		✓			✓	✓
Will there be a courthouse? Courtrooms? Offices to meet with attorneys? A precinct co-located? What exactly is going to happen at this facility?	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Do something in coordination with other cities. Don't go it alone.	✓		✓	✓		
Police presence will increase around a jail; crime rates might go down, it might actually be safer.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
What kind of visitors will this attract and how will that affect community safety? Gang members? Drugs? Prostitution?	✓	✓				
What's going to spring up around the jail? Bail bonds, check cashing, attorneys, restaurants, human services, services for jail employees? How is that impact on an area being considered?	✓				✓	✓
How are the dynamics between the city and the county going to work? The city and county haven't always worked well together in the past. The county still has a public health and public safety responsibility that would include this population.	✓	✓				
Don't place it on property that has commercial or industrial value; that would have an economic and jobs impact. Consider best or highest use. The Mayor is committed to preserving industrial space. Placing it in an industrial area would contradict that.				✓		
We need to lock up habitual criminals, felons who plead down, people who are more likely to be violent. Felons were once misdemeanants. We need to keep them off the streets.	✓					
There have been rumors the county would build a new jail; we've been told that they're not; now we're hearing the city is. The opposition was focused on the county, now it will be focused on the city.		✓				

How is this going to be integrated into the Neighborhood Plan where it's sited? What about the AJOMP (Adult Justice Operational Master Plan)?	✓	✓				
What have other cities facing this problem done? How did their neighborhoods react?	✓	✓		✓		
Consider all neighborhoods equally, not just sites that are currently available. Use eminent domain if you have to, take a lottery approach if you have to, but make it equitable and fair and equally likely to go in any neighborhood in the city.	✓	✓				
What is going to be displaced by the jail?	✓	✓				
How is the Seattle Police Department part of this conversation? Are you looking at how bookings are done?	✓				✓	
A positive outcome of this will be separating the misdemeanor and felony populations. Safer and better for the misdemeanants.		✓				
What will the environmental impact of the building be?	✓					
Once the City builds it, what stops the City from taking overflow felony prisoners someday?	✓					

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Introduction

Thank you for meeting with me. As Brenda Bauer said in her letter, by 2013, the King County Jail will no longer accept misdemeanor inmates from Seattle and other surrounding cities. The City of Seattle must make new plans to manage its misdemeanor population, which may include building a jail to house its misdemeanor inmates. Seattle wants to get input from leaders like you from all parts of the City. Over the next 45 minutes to an hour, I'll ask you some general questions that we'll use just to get the conversation started. Feel free to go off on a tangent if you feel it is important.

Before we get started on the questions, though, I'd like to share some background information with you so you'll have a good foundation in a few of the basic facts. Okay? Let's get started.

The City of Seattle doesn't currently operate a jail. When a Seattle police officer arrests someone, that person is taken to the King County Jail, whether the offense is a misdemeanor or a felony. Most people just assume that the City operates its own jail, but it doesn't. Few cities in King County do. Did you know that?

King County has told all the cities who have been paying to use the King County jail that come Jan. 1, 2013, the jail will close its doors to the cities for their misdemeanor offenders. State law requires the county to jail those charged with felonies, but it is entirely up to the county to decide if it will take misdemeanor offenders. Unfortunately, the projected growth in the felony population means that King County will no longer have room to house misdemeanor offenders. The cities have about 5 years to make other plans. That might sound like a long time, but it normally takes between 6 and 8 years to build a jail because of all the environmental and other reviews. The City must act quickly.

A new City jail will house only people charged with or convicted of misdemeanors. A typical inmate is a 37-year-old male, awaiting trial on a non-violent offense and has no other charges pending against him elsewhere. Most of the inmates are held on DUI, traffic, trespassing, and property crime charges. Assault and domestic violence make up only about 1 in 5 arrested.

The City is making an effort to keep people out of jail. For instance, the City in recent years doubled the number of misdemeanor offenders being electronically tracked and largely confined to their homes or workplaces. The number of people in jail on Seattle

misdemeanor charges is 35% less than what it was 10 years ago. The law requires, though, that some offenders, such as people with multiple DUIs, spend time in jail. Public safety demands that some offenders be locked up.

The first consideration when looking at potential sites for a new jail is whether the property is big enough. Seattle is a highly developed city. A new jail would need to sit on at least 7 acres. The site also needs to be near a major road or highway.

So let me review a few key facts before I ask you the first question.

- **Beginning Jan. 1 2013, the County will no longer allow the City to use the jail for misdemeanor offenders, although the County is required by law to house those charged with felonies.**
- **The City needs a secure place to house these mostly non-violent inmates. Wherever it goes, the jail will require at least 7 acres of available land and must be near a major arterial road.**
- **The City will continue to find ways to keep people out of jail, but there are some offenders who the law says must be jailed for public safety reasons.**
- **It normally takes at least 6 years to build a new jail, but the City must build one in 5.**

Questionnaire

- 1. How do you think the City should decide where to build a new jail?***
- 2. Do you think this kind of jail might pose added risks to a community? (If yes, what are those risks?)***
- 3. What other major criteria should be part of deciding where the City builds new jail?***
- 4. How do you think members of your community will react to the news that the City must build a new jail?***
- 5. Most people want offenders locked up securely; most people also don't want the jail in their neighborhood. What do you see as realistic options?***

Finally, this is literally the first phase of the City's effort to reach out to the community to share facts and get input. Soon, we'll need to expand the circle from individual leaders like yourself to groups. Every group is different, though. Different interests. Different structure. Different expectations.

- 6. Looking down the road, how involved do you think your community would want to be in learning more about siting a new jail and giving its feedback? What do you think are the best ways to reach the members of your group?***
- 7. We're done, but I'd like to give you a chance to add anything you think might be helpful. Do you have anything else you'd like to share?***

Thanks. . .

MISDEMEANOR JAIL NEEDS FOR CITY OF SEATTLE

The City of Seattle places most of those charged with or found guilty of a misdemeanor offense in the King County jail. After Dec. 31, 2012, though, that will change. King County has told all the cities who have been paying to use the King County jail that the county jail will close its doors to the cities for their misdemeanor offenders after 2012. The county will continue to house those charged with felonies, as state law requires. That means that all the cities in the county, including Seattle, have about 5 years to find or build new jail space for their misdemeanor population.

Seattle is looking at options and must decide soon which it will choose. The two basic choices are to build a new jail in the City or to enter a partnership with other cities in the county to build a new jail. Some people believe that misdemeanor offenders should not be jailed at all, but State law requires that certain offenders, such as people with multiple DUIs, spend time in jail. Public safety demands that some offenders be locked up. Others have suggested that the City expand its agreements with jails outside the county, such as in Yakima. That option when applied to all of the City's needs for misdemeanor jail space, though, is costly and impractical. Cities in south King County are moving forward with plans to build a new jail to serve just their communities. Their plan excludes Seattle. Seattle is also exploring a possible partnership with cities in eastern and northern King County. This group of cities is not as far along as the south county group.

The City jails 35 percent fewer people charged or convicted of misdemeanors than it did 10 years ago. For instance, the City in recent years has doubled the number of misdemeanor offenders tracked electronically and largely confined to their homes or workplaces. A typical person charged with a misdemeanor today is a 37-year-old man, awaiting trial on a non-violent offense who has no other charges pending against him elsewhere. Most are held on DUI, traffic, trespassing, and property crime charges. Assault and domestic violence make up only about one in five arrested.

It normally requires between six and eight years to locate and build a new jail; the City has less than five. A site must be at least seven acres and near a major arterial or roadway. Ideally, it would present few, if any, known issues that might slow the review process. Finally, most City residents must know that the process to site and build a new jail was thorough, open and fair. The City has identified all the sites that are 7 acres or more and near major roadways. It is now looking more closely at each potential tract in order to shorten the list. Meanwhile, it has retained The Keller Group, a local communications and public process consulting firm, to conduct a series of 50 interviews with community leaders from one end of Seattle to the other. Among those interviewed will be neighborhood group leaders as well as individuals who lead more broadly based groups throughout the City. The City hopes to understand the breadth of issues communities might have with building a new jail, what other facts they might need and how to communicate with them better.

Appendix C: Interviewees

First name	Last name	Organization	Constituency
Mark	Blumenthal	Aurora Avenue Merchants Association	Business, Neighborhood
Michael	Brown	The Seattle Foundation	Philanthropy
Phyllis	Campbell	Seattle Foundation	Philanthropy
David	Chapman	Associated Counsel for the Accused	Legal
Cheryl	Chow	Seattle School Board	Human Services, Education
Cheryl	Cobbs	Solid Ground	Human Services
Tara	Connor	Plymouth Housing Group	Human Services
Gregory	Davis	Rainier Beach Community Empowerment Coalition	Neighborhood
Jon	Fine	United Way of King County	Human Services
Tom	Flavin	enterpriseSeattle	Business
Dave	Freiboth	M.L. King County Labor Council	Business, Labor
Rick	Friedhoff	Compass Center	Faith, Human Services
Jaime	Garcia	Minority Executive Directors Coalition	Human Services
Dave	Gering	Manufacturing Industrial Council of Seattle	Business
Kay	Godefroy	Seattle Neighborhood Group	Neighborhood
Amani	Harris	The Breakfast Group	Business, Service
Father Kenneth	Haydock	Catholic Community Services	Faith, Human Services
Jack	Heavner	North Precinct Advisory Council	Neighborhood
Gayle	Johnson	Greater Seattle Chapter of The Links	Business, Service
Kate	Joncas	Downtown Seattle Association	Neighborhood, Business
Chris	Korsmo	League of Education Voters	Human Services, Education
Steve	Leahy	Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce	Business
Lyman	Legters	Casey Family Programs	Human Services
Carol	Lewis	Philanthropy Northwest	Philanthropy
Tricia	McKay	Medina Foundation	Philanthropy
Dr. Samuel	McKinney	Mt. Zion Baptist Church	Faith
Andrew	Mead	High Point Neighborhood Association	Neighborhood
Leslie	Miller	Southeast District Council	Neighborhood
Roberto	Mohn	Columbia City	Business, Neighborhood
William	Murray	GAIN Highlands	Neighborhood
Allen	Panitch	Queen Anne Community Council	Neighborhood
Herb	Pfiffner	Union Gospel Mission	Faith, Human Services
Cindy	Potter	GAIN (Greenwood Aurora Involved Neighbors)	Neighborhood
Linda	Rasmussen	YWCA	Human Services
Rogelio	Riojas	Sea Mar Community Health Clinic South Park	Human Services, Health
David	Roberson	Northwest Defenders Association	Legal
Nancy	Rogers	Magnolia Community Club	Neighborhood
Skip	Rowland	Tabor 100	Business, Service
Steve	Schwalb	Pioneer Human Services	Human Services

Cheryl	Scott	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	Philanthropy
Mike	Sletten	East Precinct Crime Council	Neighborhood
Larry	Smith	Haller Lake Community Club	Neighborhood
Pete	Spalding	Southwest Precinct Advisory Council	Neighborhood
Renee	Staton	North District Council	Neighborhood
Hilary	Stern	Casa Latina	Human Services
Lora	Suggs	South Park	Neighborhood
Alan	Sugiyama	Center for Career Alternatives	Human Services
Tom	Teicher	Interaction Transition	Human Services
Kim	Tran	Asian Counseling and Referral Service	Human Services
Colleen	Willoughby	Washington Women's Foundation	Philanthropy