



June 2026

TO: Mayor Katie Wilson, City of Seattle
Beto Yarce, Director, Office of Economic Development, City of Seattle
Chief Shon Barnes, Seattle Police Department

FROM: Seattle Film Commission

RE: Coordinated Burglaries Targeting Seattle's Film Production Businesses — A Call for Immediate, Substantive Action

We are observing Seattle's film and video production industry being under coordinated criminal attack. At least fourteen local film production companies and camera rental businesses have been burglarized since July 2025 which includes multiple incidents at the same studios (a total of 23 burglaries) with the latest burglary occurring just on May 30th.

The reported losses are staggering: Tenacious Ventures has lost an estimated \$400,000 in equipment across multiple incidents. Victory Studios has lost \$50,000. Olympic Studios has lost \$50,000. Playfish Media lost approximately \$40,000 in a single overnight break-in. Seattle Film Commissioner Michael Huang's Belltown creative agency Milli lost \$12,000 in a brazen early-morning burglary captured on camera. The total loss across all affected companies continues to climb and runs well into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

These do not appear to be crimes of opportunity or random. Business owners have identified the same suspects, the same vehicles, and the same methods across multiple incidents—masked intruders who arrive in the early morning hours, know precisely where the high-value equipment is, and walk out with it in large cases. One business owner matched a vehicle from his own security footage to surveillance footage from another burglary covered in the news. Another predicted a second break-in to within a minute, armed himself inside his business to confront the intruders. We want to be direct about what that sentence means: a Seattle small business owner felt compelled to sleep in his studio with a firearm because he could not rely on the city to protect him.



To the Mayor's Office and the Office of Economic Development: Bridge the Gap

The Office of Economic Development has acknowledged these burglaries in a letter to the affected production companies. Director Yarce confirmed that his office, the Mayor's office, and SPD are “tracking the issue.”

The film and video production industry in Seattle is not an abstract economic category. It's a dense ecosystem of small businesses—many of them sole proprietorships or companies of fewer than ten people—whose equipment represents their entire livelihood. A single camera kit, a set of prime lenses, a post-production workstation: these are not replaceable items that a small operator simply orders again. They are the tools that allow these companies to compete for commercial work, serve nonprofits and local businesses, train the next generation of Seattle filmmakers, and justify to out-of-state production companies that Seattle is a viable place to bring their projects. When these companies' ability to do business, the damage ripples through every corner of the local creative economy.

Insurance, where it exists at all, will not cover the full picture. Premiums will increase. Some policies will not renew. An advisory already sent to at least one affected business owner by his insurer, confirming SPD has linked these incidents to a coordinated cluster, means the industry's exposure will only grow more expensive from here. The city cannot stand by and watch that happen.

We are therefore calling on the Mayor's Office and the Office of Economic Development to act on the following, and to act now:

1. Establish an emergency relief and recovery fund specifically for affected film and media production businesses, with direct grants (not loans) to help companies replace stolen equipment and stabilize operations. The creative economy cannot wait for a standard grant cycle.
2. Coordinate with local lenders and the Seattle Office of Economic Development's small business programs to offer bridge financing at zero or reduced interest for affected companies while insurance claims are resolved.



3. Convene a roundtable, not a listening session, but a working session with representatives of the Seattle Film Commission, affected businesses, and your offices to map a concrete 60-day response plan.
4. Recognize publicly and on the record that the targeted destruction of this industry sector constitutes an economic emergency for the creative community, and respond accordingly.

Seattle has spent years cultivating a reputation as a city that takes film and media production seriously—as an economic driver, as a source of local jobs, and as part of the cultural identity of this region. That reputation is hollow if, when this community is under attack, the city's response amounts to a letter and a promise to keep watching.

To the Seattle Police Department: Communicate, Coordinate, and Close These Cases

The Seattle Film Commission respects the work of the Seattle Police Department's (SPD's) patrol officers, and the affected business owners have echoed that publicly. The first-response performance—in some cases arriving within one to two minutes—has been noted and appreciated.

However, we have observed what appear to be investigative failures that have left this community without answers, without arrests, and without the basic guidance they need to protect themselves.

Because of the lack of coordination and communication from SPD investigators, one studio owner has been doing the detective work himself: tracking stolen equipment to Facebook Marketplace, following suspects, recovering stolen items from a public storage unit, building a documented case. After sharing this with SPD investigative unit, the response he received, in his own words, was a vague email suggesting the incidents “could possibly be connected.” Understanding that this is an ongoing investigation for SPD, with the suspects having already been connected by multiple business owners using nothing more than consumer-grade security footage and their own initiative, SPD should do more to match that effort, to resource detectives well enough to do so, and at minimum communicate so that business owners are not risking their own safety.



One business reported it waited two months for fingerprint results from a burglary involving nearly \$400,000 in stolen equipment, and in that same period the suspects returned to attempt a second hit.

We believe SPD's communication to this business community has been inadequate. Business owners are learning about related burglaries from each other, from social media, and from news coverage. The only formal acknowledgment that these incidents are linked came not from SPD but from an insurance company advisory to the businesses it covers.

We are calling on SPD to do the following, immediately:

1. Assign dedicated investigative resources to this burglary cluster, acknowledging the burglaries are coordinated, serial criminal operation targeting a specific industry.
2. Issue a direct, detailed communication to all affected and at-risk production companies including what SPD knows about the suspects, what investigative steps have been taken, and what specific preventive measures businesses should implement now.
3. Establish a dedicated point of contact and regular update cadence for the affected businesses.
4. Coordinate across precincts. Business owners have already identified suspect vehicles appearing across multiple neighborhoods and incidents; SPD must ensure its investigative units are sharing intelligence across this case rather than treating each incident in isolation.
5. Publicly explain the resourcing gap in the investigative bureau and what the department and city are doing to address it.

The Larger Stakes

One of the affected business owners asked: "If you get all of the rental houses burglarized, if you have all the production companies at a loss—what does that mean for the larger mission to make sure we have film production here?"

It means the mission fails. It means the companies that survived the pandemic, that invested in equipment, that trained crews and built client relationships and carved out a place in this market, will close or relocate. It means Seattle loses the production infrastructure that makes it possible to attract outside productions. It means the clients



Seattle's film industry relies on to keep or bring work here will leave. It means the jobs, the tax revenue, the cultural output, and the civic prestige that come with a functioning local film economy begin to disappear. And it means the city's stated commitment to the creative sector is exposed as rhetoric that evaporated the moment it required something difficult.

We appreciate the City of Seattle's efforts to retain, attract, and grow the local film industry. Your immediate attention to this urgent issue is needed.

Respectfully,
Seattle Film Commission

Kat Ogden
Michael Huang
Champ Ensminger
Tom Florino
Mark Freid
KD Hall
Michael Gaston
Davis Powell
Lex Scope
Anthony Tackett