



# City of Seattle

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CITY CLERK

February 7, 2019

Monica Martinez Simmons  
Seattle City Clerk  
600 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Seattle, WA 98124

Dear Ms. Martinez Simmons,

I have returned Council Bill 119451 unsigned, understanding it will become law, with significant concerns that the bill does not sufficiently and equitably protect vulnerable communities at risk of displacement, and does not sufficiently protect the needs of the city to equitably add density. Additionally, the truncated consideration and enactment of the bill foreclosed the possibility of broader outreach to key stakeholders and the consideration of more holistic solutions.

This legislation establishes a one-year moratorium on development of areas currently used as mobile home parks. Although I share the Council's goal of protecting low-income and senior community members from displacement from affordable housing, this bill was unfortunately hastily conceived, written, and enacted without the range of thoughtful solutions being debated and considered. The moratorium does not preclude the current property owners from selling the property, evicting tenants, or raising rents.

We must create more affordable housing in order to make our city more equitable, diverse, and climate friendly, but an equally undeniable impact of growth in Seattle is that it has led to displacement and gentrification, particularly in communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities. This reality calls for deep community engagement and a holistic response. We should consider many tools, including using MHA funds to protect against displacement, incentivizing housing with a "right of return" for displaced households, working with owners of currently affordable housing to keep the housing in place and rents affordable, and improving protections against evictions. The moratorium does none of these things.

In recent days, my office has started a collaborative dialogue with interested parties in the hopes of forging a voluntary agreement whereby the owners forgo sale and redevelopment for a determined period of time, giving the City an opportunity to work with existing tenants and other stakeholders on longer term, broader solutions. The owners are willing and interested in exploring the options with us. They have been open to and willing to engage in a productive discussion.

Unfortunately, there is not enough time to meet with all parties, explore a range of options or put any agreement in place before the legislation takes effect. Had the prime sponsor of the legislation engaged the property owner several weeks ago when she introduced this legislation, there may have been sufficient time to put such an agreement in place that would have better protected residents from evictions or rent increases. In the coming weeks, I hope to continue the conversations with all interested parties to help resolve both the immediate issues and set a framework for longer term solutions.

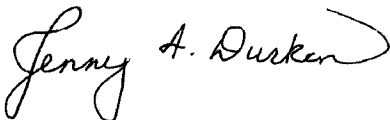
The bill also purports to establish a work program for the Office of Planning and Community Development and the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections. Because the City Charter vests certain powers exclusively in the Executive, I am considering the current proposed Council “workplan” outlined in Council Bill 119451 as only advisory in nature.

We will be devising a path forward after we have had the opportunity to consult with the affected tenants, the owners, other stakeholders, members of the City Council and a range of affected Executive Departments, including the Office of Planning and Community Development, the Office of Housing, the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections and the Department of Neighborhoods (none of whom were consulted in this process).

In short, the City should be approaching displacement strategies comprehensively. Instead of one-off development moratoriums, we must look at how regulations, tenant protections, incentives and funding work together to increase housing affordability while preventing and mitigating displacement. We must promote neighborhood stability by continuing our commitment to building affordable housing in locations at high risk of displacement that may also include ground floor spaces for cultural, community and commercial anchors. We must be strategic in acquiring properties to preserve affordability that sometimes exists in the market. We must proactively help longtime residents remain in their neighborhoods while also increasing our supply of housing to mitigate the pressures our growing economy places on our housing stock. We must look at these strategies as a suite of strategies that work together in a balanced way, all with the input of the communities they are meant to serve.

I look forward to working with a broad range of stakeholders and the City Council in developing and implementing these strategies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny A. Durkan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jenny A. Durkan  
Mayor of Seattle