

## REQUEST FOR COMMUNITY INPUT

On September 19, 2006, at 5:30 p.m., the Tacoma City Council will hold a public hearing to take testimony regarding two ordinances [attached] to limit “panhandling” that is directed at traffic or is coercive. Community input is needed:

Below are questions, adapted from a 2004 Department of Justice publication, the answers to which may assist City Council members in necessary fact-finding:

### *Complainants and Donors*

- **To what extent does panhandling bother or intimidate?**
  - How would you feel if you were approached by a panhandler near a financial institution, such as an ATM, or leaving a bank or credit union?
  - Have you ever been approached when you felt you were trapped, such as while using a pay phone, or fueling your vehicle or waiting for a bus?
  - Have you ever felt intimidated into making a donation to a panhandler, such as:
    - Being followed after telling a panhandler “no”?
    - Being spoken to harshly or cursed or gestured at by a panhandler?
    - Having free passage impeded by one or more panhandlers?
    - Had a panhandler try to wash your windshield or force a flower or other product or service?

### **Are complaints filed with your organization (business/neighborhood associations)?**

- Who are the complainants? Merchants? Shoppers? Workers? Students?
- Does panhandling alter people's behavior and routines (e.g., do people avoid certain areas or stores)?
- What are the particular complaints?
- What do complainants suggest should be done to control panhandling?
- What percentage of passersby give money to panhandlers?
- Why do people say they give money to panhandlers? What do they believe the panhandlers use the money for?

### *Panhandlers*

- How many panhandlers are in the area? How many are regulars? How many are occasional?
- What is known about the regular panhandlers? What is their age, race, gender, family status, employment status, and employment history? Are they substance abusers? Do they suffer from mental illness?
- Do the panhandlers know about and use social services in the area (e.g., shelters, soup kitchens, job training, substance abuse treatment)?

### *Location/Time*

- Where does panhandling commonly occur? In parks, plazas and squares? On sidewalks? Near ATMs? Near public transportation stops and stations?
- Have you ever been delayed in traffic because an occupant in another vehicle has stopped to make a donation to a panhandler?
  - Have you ever been distracted while driving because of panhandling?
  - Have you ever felt safety, including that of the panhandler, was jeopardized by panhandling directed at occupants of vehicles?

Please contact Assistant City Attorney Kim Gerhardt at 591-5917 or by email at [kgerhard@ci.tacoma.wa.us](mailto:kgerhard@ci.tacoma.wa.us) with your comments or concerns.