



We are writing to convey our deep sorrow and dismay at the events occurring in the CHOP area of our neighborhood and express our profound concern for the safety of our residents, business owners, nonprofits and students. Our city has a responsibility to ensure the safety of all its residents. This is an untenable situation which must immediately be addressed by our city leadership.

It wasn't so many days ago that the streets surrounding our offices at 12<sup>th</sup> Ave Arts were filled with protesters demanding justice at the edge of police barricades. In fact, the streets throughout the city, and in cities across the nation were filled with protesters demanding justice. And we must never forget the justice we fight for. Breonna Taylor, Charleena Lyles, George Floyd and so many other Black Americans unjustly killed at the hands of police officers. The protesters on the streets beneath our windows were angry, but peaceful. Demanding justice they were met with pepper spray, flash bombs and tear gas. And yes, of the thousands of protesters there were those few who went too far or were even intentional in their efforts to turn the protests awry. But none of it warranted the brute militaristic response that all received.

For several nights the occupation of our community by the police continued, tear gas penetrated our apartments, flash bombs and pepper spray traumatized so many of the families and children who live in our buildings. Arrests and anger piled up until the voice of the community, ours among them, demanded that the

police stand down. On June 8, the police retreated, inexplicably boarding up their building and leaving behind their barriers that were immediately deployed to create a new occupation zone known as the CHAZ. For a while, it was the most peaceful the community had been for many days.

Earnest people filled the CHAZ, then the CHOP to protest, to debate, and to demand change. The community initially embraced the CHOP as an alternative to police violence, joining in the call for change, a change we still demand. But what's happening in the area now has little to do with the movement for Black lives. Most of the activists have moved on. The park has become an encampment, our residents have been threatened and chased and businesses are being hurt. Families are afraid to go through the area or use the park. Graffiti covers every surface. There have been five shootings. And above all else two young Black men have been killed while one remains in critical condition.

Community Roots Housing owns 13 properties in the vicinity of the CHOP. There are 694 people living in those buildings whose annual household incomes average \$21,948. They include 138 children and 78 single parent households. Our residents are Black, Latino, Native American, Pacific Islander and Asian, White and multiracial. In fact the majority of our residents in these properties are people of color, 56% to be exact. The compact we make with our residents is that they have affordable homes and access to a vibrant community. But that vibrant community no longer exists. These residents have become victims of an occupation better characterized today by its violence, chaos and killings than anything else. As leaders of Community Roots Housing, it is our duty to stand up to say, it is time for the CHOP to come down.

We are adamantly supportive of the Black Lives Matter movement and of all Black lives, we are adamantly supportive of deep police reform and leading with compassion instead of guns. But forcing us to choose between anarchy and police brutality is a false dichotomy. Compassion and law-enforcement should not be mutually exclusive. And what's happening in our neighborhood now is not progressing the movement but impeding it.

While most disturbing of all, the shooting just this past Monday morning of two young Black men, 16 and 14 years old, just children really, whose lives and families have been destroyed by this senseless violence, fills our hearts with the greatest grieving. And compounding this grief is knowing the damage this is doing to the Black Lives Matter movement itself, and the damage this is doing to our efforts to reform how we do policing. It is time for the CHOP to close.

There have been many missteps that have led to this untenable situation but now isn't the time to focus on those. It's time to focus on moving forward and giving the community back to the community.

The City must put our community back together and the City must enact deep reform of our policing to ensure that Black Lives will not be unjustly taken again.

Thank you.

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