

Date: July 30, 2025
To: Councilmember Debora Juarez, Chair, Housing & Human Services Committee
From: Chris Klaeyesen, Homelessness Division Director, Human Services Department
Kelli Larsen, Director of Policy & Planning, Office of Housing
Subject: SLI HSD-007S-A: Request that HSD and OH provide a report on Good Neighbor Agreements

Introduction

Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) HSD-007S-A, adopted with the 2025 Budget, requests that the Human Services Department (HSD) and the Office of Housing (OH), working with the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA), provide a report on Good Neighbor Agreements (GNA). For this SLI, GNAs are defined as agreements held by service providers to guide community stakeholder engagement, including residents and businesses, related to a physical location that provides:

1. affordable housing to any population, including permanent supportive housing (PSH) or
2. services to people experiencing homelessness, such as day centers and shelters.

This SLI response is a collaborative effort between HSD, KCRHA, and OH given the spectrum of services considered. As funders of homelessness programs, HSD and KCRHA provide responses for emergency shelter, safe parking, day centers, and transitional housing programs. OH is responsible for analysis pertaining to the Permanent Supportive and Affordable Housing portfolio it oversees.

1) Describe HSD, OH and KCRHA’s current practices regarding GNAs for City-funded projects, including: a) the specific types of City-funded projects for which a GNA is required; b) what, if any, minimum standards are required for all GNAs; c) the length of time that a GNA is required for a project (for example, one year versus on-going).

For homelessness services, GNAs are required for all City-Funded emergency shelter, safe parking, day centers, and transitional housing programs. This was first implemented by HSD in 2019 as a mandatory performance standard in service contracts with the following required elements:

- A process for communicating with neighboring businesses and residents,
- Policies and procedures to address neighborhood concerns,
- A written policy concerning the rights and responsibilities of clients
- Program rules and restrictions, and
- Opportunities for the provider, clients, and community members to participate in supporting program and client success in healthy and safe neighborhoods.

KCRHA maintained the GNA requirement when it assumed administration of these City of Seattle contracts in 2022 and later expanded the requirements to include:

- Establishing and maintaining regular communication with the neighborhood to keep them informed about activities, programs and changes that may impact the neighborhood,
- Prioritizing community safety and security by addressing any concerns and ensuring a peaceful coexistence between the facility and the surrounding areas,
- Regularly evaluating operations and policies to identify areas for improvement, taking proactive steps to address any concerns raised by the community and continuously enhance services and facilities, and

- Actively soliciting and considering feedback from the community, using it as a valuable tool to guide decision-making and to improve practices to better meet the needs of the neighborhood.

For affordable housing, the Seattle Office of Housing (OH) requires projects seeking capital funding to include a Community Relations Plan with their application. This plan is updated throughout the award and construction process. [OH Housing Funding Policies](#) outline what are required in this plan, which include:

- A neighborhood notification letter of the project and a list of recipients,
- Completed outreach and planned future activities for maintaining ongoing communication with immediate neighbors and community organizations throughout the project's planning, design, construction and operation phases,
- Community education and involvement plan for addressing complaints or issues raised by tenants and neighbors about the building or its tenants, and
- Ensuring the housing project is a good neighbor, which is measured by good maintenance, street appearance and responsiveness to neighborhood concerns and complaints.

Once funding is finalized, the OH loan documents require a management plan describing the project's community relations plan and processes for resolving neighborhood complaints. Organizations are required to provide OH with any changes to their management plans.

2) Describe the types of issues that existing GNAs are designed to address.

Existing GNAs are intended to support safe and clean program environments; outline provider policies and procedures for addressing neighbor concerns; share program rules and restrictions; communicate any facility construction or development impacts; and foster opportunities for the program and its client to contribute to, and partner with, their neighborhoods.

3) Describe any relevant legal limitations to requiring providers to address illegal or disruptive behavior happening both internally and externally to the building, for example on the sidewalk or right of way.

GNAs themselves are not legally binding, however, providers are responsible for remediating issues within their program and housing spaces as much as possible and practicable. This includes managing clients engaged in disturbances in alignment with service contract terms and applicable landlord tenant laws. Disruptive behavior is generally managed by program staff and their skilled deployment of best practices in case management, outreach, trauma informed care, and harm reduction.

Providers, including their staff and clients, are community members themselves and rely on, and are subject to, the same regulations and laws as their neighbors. Regarding instances of illegal activity and concerns for public safety, it is critical to recognize that providers are not an extension of law enforcement. In such cases, it is the responsibility of law enforcement—particularly the Seattle Police Department (SPD)—to assess legality of actions and respond appropriately to ensure public safety. Separately, providers must also comply with City building and property codes for issues including, but not limited to, excessive noise, pests, and trash accumulation that are enforced by the Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections (SDCI) and the Seattle Fire Department (SFD).

Housing providers must follow State and City laws that detail the rights and responsibilities for both landlords and renters.¹ These laws apply uniformly to all landlords and renters, regardless of their income level or prior housing status. All tenants of OH-funded permanent housing hold a lease agreement with the property manager. As part of the lease, tenants are subject to State and City laws that include rules for Just Cause for Eviction. Under these terms, tenants may be evicted from housing if they engage in certain illegal or disruptive behaviors. There is significant existing legal framework for renters living in OH-funded properties. [OH Housing Funding Policies](#) also include language about OH-eligible and ineligible activities and costs and require projects to adhere to [Chapter 59.18 of the Revised Code of Washington \(the Residential Landlord-Tenant Act\)](#).

For reference, the Seattle Municipal Code describes Just Cause for Eviction as follows:

“A tenant, or with the consent of the tenant, the tenant's subtenant, sublessee, resident, or guest, has engaged in criminal activity on the premises, or on the property or public right-of-way abutting the premises, and the owner has specified in the notice of termination the crime alleged to have been committed and the general facts supporting the allegation, and has assured that the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections has recorded receipt of a copy of the notice of termination. For purposes of this subsection 22.205.010.P, a person has "engaged in criminal activity" if the person:

- 1. Engages in drug-related activity that would constitute a violation of chapters 69.41, 69.50, or 69.52 RCW, or*
- 2. Engages in activity that is a crime under the laws of this state, but only if the activity substantially affects the health or safety of other tenants or the owner.”²*

4) Describe how those limitations can be overcome based on best practices. For example, does proactive outreach for medication management or other types of substance abuse treatment reduce GNA-related issues?

HSD, KCRHA, and OH have learned through our work with service providers that properly staffed and supported case management teams, along with robust behavioral and physical health systems, are critical in supporting tenants and clients. To be successful, these programs also rely on standard government public safety and public health responses. Shelter and permanent supportive housing (PSH) providers offer case management to clients and tenants to support their long-term stability. This includes assessing service needs, making resource connections (that may include behavioral and substance use disorder supports) and, in the case of shelter programs, fostering connections to permanent housing. Affordable housing providers do not have services staff available at the same level as PSH, as tenants are expected to be able to navigate their own service needs.

Aside from case management, shelter and PSH providers are funded to ensure programs are staffed to provide 24/7 operations. This is critical to ensure that providers can maintain a safe and healthy site for clients and the adjacent community. The investment in 24/7 operating staff is intended to support client stability, crisis response, and regular upkeep and maintenance of facilities and property.

¹ See State Landlord duties are described here in [RCW 59.18.060: Landlord—Duties](#); State Tenant duties are described in [RCW 59.18.130: Duties of tenant](#); and City of Seattle Rental Agreement Regulation can be found at [Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 7.23](#).

² Seattle Municipal Code, 22.205.010 – *Reasons for Termination of Tenancy*, [link](#).

Outside of these service providers, Washington’s behavioral and physical health systems are struggling with workforce and service shortages. Our community has experienced a loss of dedicated mental health and substance use disorder treatment beds and facilities, and the current system isn’t meeting the needs of all those experiencing acute crisis or in need of ongoing outpatient services.³ Despite these challenges, there is effective work occurring in PSH and homelessness services settings to provide individually tailored medication and services to vulnerable people.⁴ These services are improving health and quality of life for vulnerable people living in Seattle, including those living in shelter and PSH.

5) Describe best practices for GNAs based on local, state and national research, including recommended best practices for regularly reaching out to neighborhood residents to understand and pro-actively address concerns (for example via community meetings, a survey, etc.).

In our review of agreements from other jurisdictions⁵, common elements were observed that align with Seattle’s existing process including:

- Agreements are not legally binding,
- Acknowledging the rights of all community members to feel safe and welcome and to enjoy property and public space,
- Acknowledging common and shared goals,
- Encouraging collaboration and communication to address community concerns effectively, and
- Providers are asked to establish a point of contact for community to share concerns.

Outside these examples from other jurisdictions, there is not a significant evidence base for GNAs from which to derive best practices. However, guidance on community engagement in general, largely focused on developing support with community to locate new supportive housing and homelessness programs, is available from the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), Housing as a Pathway to Justice, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.⁶

Early and Sustained Community Engagement

Community engagement efforts are critical at the onset of a project and ongoing. Engagement should include individuals with a range of viewpoints—not only project supporters—to understand opportunities to address valid concerns, improve program design, and foster stronger neighborhood relations. This approach is also endorsed by the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), who found this to be a highly effective strategy across the multiple case studies.

³ Hannah Furfaro, “Where Did King County’s Mental Health Beds Go?”, *The Seattle Times*, February 25, 2023, [link](#).

⁴ Taylor Blatchford, “[King County Expands Mobile Teams that Bring Care to People in Crisis](#),” *The Seattle Times*, November 29, 2024; Greg Kim and Hannah Furfaro, “[Seattle Nonprofit Rolling Out Potential ‘Game Changer’ for Fentanyl Addiction](#),” *The Seattle Times*, April 27, 2025; Conner Board, “[Mobile Drug Treatment Service to Expand in Seattle, Open Program in Olympia](#),” *King 5*, September 27, 2023.

⁵ See City of Spokane, *Good Neighbor Agreement*, [link](#); Homeless Leadership Coalition, *Good Neighbor Agreement Template*, [link](#); Open Door HousingWorks, *Good Neighbor Policy*, [link](#); and The Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, *X Street Navigation Center Good Neighbor Policy*, 2021, [link](#).

⁶ See BC Housing Research Centre, *Toolkit: Community Acceptance of Non-Market Housing*, June 2019, [link](#); Corporation for Supportive Housing, *Thinking Beyond “NIMBY”: Building Community Support for Supportive Housing*, March 2006; Groundwork USA, *Best Practices for Meaningful Community Engagement*, 2018, [link](#); United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Community Engagement Toolkit: Building Purpose and Participation*, [link](#); Scholars Strategy Network, *Understanding Community Acceptance of and Opposition to Homeless-Serving Facilities*, November 2022, [link](#)

Transparent Operations and Education

CSH recommends that providers make accessible, public-facing materials that explain key operational aspects of the development. These materials may detail scope of services, how on-site crises are managed, hours of operation, and contact information for questions or concerns. Aside from the above, the Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR) reviewed the language of this SLI and offered a recommendation to “develop a research-based GNA framework that integrates a Racial Equity Toolkit, applies to all entities with neighborhood impacts, accounts for the realities of urban city life, and reflects Seattle’s commitment to civil rights”. The full memo from SOCR is included as an appendix.

6) Assess the option of requiring GNA longer than one year for OH-funded projects (the current standard) and describe any cost or other impacts to consider in doing so.

In general, lease agreements include descriptions of tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities, intended to support tenants to have the most positive housing tenures possible. These provisions are in the best interest of the tenant and their neighbors, the building, the organization, and the community. These laws are developed through public discourse and the legislative process, so they are thoroughly reviewed and informed by practical experience and numerous perspectives. Many landlords also maintain house rules or program agreements, which they use to set and manage behavioral expectations for tenants.

Individual housing providers establish lease agreements with their own legal counsel, informed by the existing State and City laws. Providers enforce tenant behavior expectations and lease expectations with the assistance of various community supports, the behavioral health crisis response system, the law enforcement system, and the criminal and civil legal systems.

Legal framework exists for managing tenant behaviors and housing providers are well engaged within their communities to build relationships with local businesses, SPD precinct leaders, and other community members. Relationships are necessary for ensuring successful housing operations and a positive environment for all tenants. It is the housing providers’ best interest to operate buildings well to achieve their mission and vision, and to meet their financial and legal obligations.

It would be prudent to further assess the value of layering GNA requirements on top of the current legal framework for landlord-tenant relationships. GNAs are generally not legally binding, whereas the landlord-tenant laws provide significant legal requirements for landlords and tenants to follow. OH is interested in working with housing providers to further explore this topic and, if needed, co-create a housing-specific GNA to codify existing engagement practices to clearly communicate with community.

There are additional costs associated with administering GNAs, which are not accounted for with current affordable housing operating budgets. Most PSH providers already operate GNAs in their programs tied to other requirements from homelessness services funding.

7) Recommend a consistent set of standards that the City should incorporate into all GNAs and specify what types of projects should be subject to a GNA.

HSD, OH, and KCRHA recommend convening providers before changes are made to ensure their perspectives and subject matter expertise are incorporated and that any potential GNA revisions don’t create negative service or funding impacts. The services discussed in this response are critical to provide for the basic needs of our most vulnerable residents and their presence contributes to the overall health of

every Seattle community. At this moment when federal funding cuts threaten these services outright, it is important that we do everything in our power to support them.

8) Provide a plan and timeline for incorporating the recommended set of standards into existing and new provider contracts for implementation no earlier than January 1, 2026. The report should detail any challenges, and how to address them, related to amending existing contracts in order to integrate this recommended set of standards.

HSD, OH, and KCHRA must first complete the provider engagement detailed in our response to # 7 above. Therefore, a plan and timeline for potential GNA policy revisions are to be determined.

9) Recommend a plan for monitoring and enforcing provider compliance with GNA standards as incorporated into their contracts.

Similar to # 8, a monitoring and enforcement plan would be established after potential GNA revisions are determined following provider engagement. However, it should be noted that KCHRA includes oversight of existing GNA compliance in its annual comprehensive monitoring. OH Asset Management monitoring is generally focused on lease provisions related to housing costs (rents and other fees charged), tenant eligibility (income certification) and financial management (audit and budget review). This could potentially be expanded to include GNAs, but OH will need to further explore funding and staffing impacts related to any potential additional monitoring.