

Multnomah County Board of Commissioners
501 SE Hawthorne Blvd, Suite 600
Portland, OR 97214

Subject: Response to Chair Vega Pederson's Central Library Safety Plan

Dear Chair Vega Pederson,

Thank you for your response to the concerns of downtown retailers and the direct outreach to businesses who signed the Downtown Retail Council letter calling for urgent action at the Central Library. We are encouraged by the additional security guards patrolling the exterior of the building and a security guard stationed in the Central Library's vestibule. We have noticed some improvement in illegal activity.

While we appreciate any improvement, we hope that in the future when we repeatedly raise concerns over the course of a year, throughout multiple meetings, that it won't take a homicide, assault or public letter to galvanize actions.

In response to your recent letter we would like to observe a key discrepancy that has been relayed repeatedly over the course of the aforementioned meetings and these exchanges; the County asserts it has a longstanding policy prohibiting illegal behavior. We do not dispute that these policies exist, we highly dispute whether any of these rules have ever been enforced with any regularity.

For example, you stated in your response that libraries already have zero-tolerance policies in place to prohibit illegal activity such as drug dealing. Enforcement of those policies is essential to keep fentanyl and other illicit drugs out of the library to protect staff and patrons from the major threat to health and safety posed by fentanyl exposure.

- As you are aware, an investigation conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health found that 36% of interviewed employees had reported one or more cases involving exposure to illicit drugs through the air or uncovered skin at work over the past 12 months. Of the employees who reported an incident, 56% reported having drug exposure symptoms.

Some other examples our staff have witnessed or have been informed of by library staff are:

- Use of public computers for watching sexually explicit adult material. Using library technology for sexual content is a regular occurrence. If you do not know this, we encourage you to visit the Central Library.
- Central Library leadership repeatedly informed us in multiple meetings that some library staff have 'ideological differences' with law enforcement and do not call

Portland Police even when appropriate. These are the direct communications of your library leadership. We encourage you to discuss this matter with your staff.

- The use of exclusions appears to not be in effect whatsoever since it would require checking identification. Since this is not in effect, how exactly are you providing enforcement of exclusions?

We also dispute the assertion that illegal activity beyond the balustrades and benches is the responsibility of the City of Portland. The Americans with Disabilities Act and City of Portland Code requires property owners to maintain abutting sidewalks, inclusive of removing refuse and other items that hinder accessibility and create unsafe conditions. PCC 17.28.020.A. further states that owners who fail to maintain their abutting sidewalk are liable to the public and the City for failing to keep the sidewalk in safe condition.

In addition to this dispute, illegal behavior has not moved exclusively to the sidewalk or beyond the property line. On any day, at any hour, you can plainly see illegal activity on County property by walking, driving, biking, or taking transit around the library.

Request: While we appreciate your expressed commitment to keeping library staff and patrons safe, we would like to see an enforcement plan consistently implemented to protect library staff and patrons.

- Existing security protocols for County buildings such as the Multnomah County Courthouse and the Multnomah Building could be implemented at the Central Library. These public-space security protocols (such as the use of metal detectors) effectively prohibit anyone with weapons from entering the premises and potentially endangering the lives of others.

We wholeheartedly agree with the notion that if people feel unsafe in any public space, they will choose to not visit that space. We are asking for foundational standards of public safety to be applied at the Central Library. The library should be a point of pride for our community. The space should be inclusive to welcome our senior citizens, children and everyone in-between; not a location to use drugs in or around the building, watch adult material, commit acts of violence and otherwise make the community unwelcome.

Thank you again for engaging the business community to improve the conditions around the Central Library. We look forward to continued improvements to make our beautiful library a destination for residents and visitors alike.

Sincerely,

Jason Gerlt, Downtown Retail Council Chair, Southpark Seafood

Amy Adams, Adams and Ollman
Todd Molinari, after/time Collective Gallery
Kelly Birkinbine, Bently Fleurs
Brian Owendoff, BMO Commercial Real Estate
Avaly Scarpelli, BOMA Oregon
Sarah Shaoul, Bricks Need Mortar
Christine Herman, Case Study Coffee
Frank Failace, Dante's, Star Theater, Rialto, Jockey club, Kit Kat Club, Burnside Suites
Todd Hepp, Eastern Western Corp / The Medical Dental Building
Katherine Sealy, Event Cosmetics
Sam Raj, First Baptist Church
Eric Bowler, Fortune
Rhonda Neinburg, Hendric & McGuire Optical
Maddy McCabe, JLL Commercial Real Estate
The Kiriko Team, Kiriko Made
Tiffany Love, Love Belizean
Robert Maloy & Eve Celsi, Maloy's Jewelry
Melanie Townsend, Mel's Frame Shop
Eric Murfitt, Mercantile Portland
Thomas McLaughlin, Momo's
Kathy Chaya, Mucca Osteria
Suzanne McLain, Pulse Salon & Spa
Suvi Wesa, Schnitzer Properties
Fabiola Cardenas, Sparkly Gowns
Patrick Earnest, St. James Child Development Center
Cassandra Jackson, The Joinery
William Hobbs, The Paramount Hotel Portland
Amy Mulcaster, The Portland Clinic
Amber Jobe, The Skeleton Key Odditorium
Kristin Van Buskirk, Woonwinkel
Sohrab Vossoughi, Ziba Design