

# Right 2 Dream Too considers move to a new Old Town site

*Judge to rule on city's motion to dismiss nonprofit's suit against fines for Fourth and Burnside operation*

BY JOANNE ZUHL  
STAFF WRITER

Right 2 Dream Too, the homeless way station at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Burnside, will square off with city attorneys next week for perhaps the final round in their 20-month standoff. On July 11, a motion to dismiss by the city will be considered in circuit court, and if granted, could signal another legal dead-end for R2DToo, which is trying to find a more permanent site for people experiencing homelessness.

But Right 2 Dream Too isn't waiting for any favors from the city, which hasn't budged on its course to fine the controversial camp out of existence.

Organizers with R2DToo are in preliminary talks with Central City Concern about possibly occupying CCC's Medford Building at Glisan Street and Fifth Avenue in Old Town. The building had housed Transition Projects Inc., which relocated to the Bud Clark Commons in 2011. Transition Projects used the Medford Building as temporary housing and support services for people experiencing homelessness.

Ibrahim Mubarak, the spokesman for the nonprofit R2DToo, said this week that an "undisclosed group" of Chinatown businessmen has made an offer on the building on R2DToo's behalf. It is one of several sites the group is considering for a new home, according to Mubarak.

However, any location the group settles on will have to have a long-term lease, ideally five years, says Mubarak, who added that the TPI building might be available for only six months.

"We have been and continue to look for alternative locations that meet the needs of that population, which include transportation and having access to social services," says R2DToo attorney Mark



Kramer.

On Tuesday, Kramer and Mubarak met with City Commissioner Amanda Fritz to talk about waiving the fines and dismissing the ones already accrued. In the recent bureau assignments from Mayor Charlie Hales, Fritz assumed authority over the Bureau of Development Services which is the agency fining R2DToo.

It's the policy of the city to not comment on pending litigation, but Mubarak said the meeting went well.

Mubarak says any decision on relocating R2DToo would be made by the nonprofit's seven-member board of directors.

The Medford Building is not entirely empty. The first floor houses the VOA Treatment Center along with an expanse of space formerly used as winger shelter with a capacity for 95. The upper floors are single-residency apartments, nearly all occupied. R2DToo regularly shelters about 60 people at night, with that number

swelling to 90 to 100 during the winter, Mubarak says.

If a deal is reached, it would be the biggest breakthrough to date for the camp that has battled the city and local business pressures to continue operating.

Since October 2011, R2DToo has leased the property from owners Michael Wright and Daniel Cossette for \$1 a year. In recent months, a "for sale" sign has been prominently displayed on the lot. In December, the organization has sued the city seeking to suspend the citation process that has levied more than \$21,700 in fines on the camp for code violations. The fine goes up \$1,500 every month, according to Kramer. While the fines technically fall on the property owners' responsibility, they are directed at R2DToo.

The city has fined the site under two code violations. The first being that the fence around the property - constructed from used doors - exceeded the 6-foot limit, a

situation that was recently corrected. The second violation comes because the city categorizes R2DToo as a recreational campground, subject to certain city requirements. The organization maintains this is an emergency shelter operation for people experiencing homelessness, and is allowed under state statute.

The city has moved to have the case dismissed on technical grounds, and if the circuit court judge grants the city's motion, the case could simply die for lack of money or administrative options to move forward.

Kramer, who is donating his time to the case as a member of the National Lawyers Guild, said that if the case dies, the group could appeal or try for an administrative hearing, although deadlines have passed and appeals are costly. But Kramer stays optimistic.

"Things can happen," Kramer says. "There could be some type of waiver. Where there's a will there's a way."

## Razing the stakes: Seattle homeless community is moving on

BY AARON BURKHALTER  
STAFF REPORTER

Seattle's Nickelsville, a tented community similar to Right 2 Dream Too, was alive and growing.

On a recent Wednesday, 27 teens rolled up their T-shirt sleeves in the warm sun and built raised platforms for tents.

They pulled up blackberry vines and spread bark along pathways that bisect the 10-acre homeless encampment in West Seattle that is home to 125 people.

The youth group, all members of the First Church of the Nazarene in Lewiston, Idaho, had traveled to Nickelsville for their annual mission trip.

While they sought to build up Nickelsville, Seattle city leaders were on a mission to bring the tents down. Just two days earlier, seven of the nine members of the Seattle City Council had signed a letter to Mayor Mike McGinn imploring him to close the camp by Sept. 1 and move the residents to more stable, indoor housing.

How that will happen isn't clear.

"I don't think there is a single master solution for every person there (at Nickelsville)," said Council President Sally

Clark. "I don't envision that everybody goes to the same shelter; I don't envision that everybody goes to a tent city at a church."

Clark and the city council pledged \$500,000 from the city's general fund to help. Now it's on the Seattle Human Services Department to work out the logistics.

The city council has promised to provide outreach to the Nickelodeons, who have a wide range of needs. Some camp residents are open to outreach, others want to continue camping outside. Most are skeptical the city will provide anything other than hotel vouchers and emergency shelters.

Nickelsville has languished on city-owned property between West Marginal Way and Highland Park Way, without access to water or electricity, for the past two years. Camp residents rely on portable toilets and bottled drinking water and travel off-site to take a shower.

Neighbors complained the camp suffered from lax security, and residents of Nickelsville complained the Seattle Police Department wasn't doing enough to help them keep the camp safe.

Two legal claims forced the Seattle City Council to act. A neighborhood group asked the courts to decide if the camp is illegal. A private property owner whose land abuts the camp filed a \$1.65 million claim, alleging that the camp's presence has decreased the value of his property.

Seven of the Seattle City Council members took the first decisive action in the May 10 letter ordering McGinn to evict the Nickelodeons.

Councilmembers Clark, Richard Conlin and Jean Godden told Real Change News they are confident that \$500,000 and a concerted effort by the Human Services Department will be enough to relocate the residents of Nickelsville to more permanent housing.

Councilmember Mike O'Brien is concerned Nickelodeons would be scattered to greenbelts and under highways and bridges.

"If \$500,000 could house 100 people," O'Brien said, "we would have solved the homelessness problem a long time ago."

A number of camp residents agree.

Trace De Garmo questioned whether the city could offer anything better than a mat on the floor in an emergency shelter.

"I'd want to know if it's something actually sustainable," De Garmo said. "Is it something that's going to be actually moving me forward?"

Many who show up at Nickelsville in Seattle or Tent City 3 come at the recommendation of another shelter or service, said Jarvis Capucion, a resident at Tent City 3.

Sometimes, the tent cities are full, too, he said to the Seattle City Council's Housing, Human Services, Health and Culture Committee June 12.

"I am ashamed to tell another homeless person, 'I'm sorry, you can't stay here; we're full,'" Capucion said.

Lisa Patterson brought her 14-year-old daughter to Nickelsville after she couldn't find anyplace else to live. She's already on waiting lists for family housing, she said.

While she waited, Nickelsville provided Patterson and her daughter a place to stay, but gave her more than that, she added.

"I've got support now; friends," Patterson said.

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