

Donald J. Mitchell
Sequoyah Hills Oak Knoll Neighborhood Association (SHOKNA)
4415 St. Andrews Road
Oakland, CA 94605
510.917.7050

August 5, 2015

To: Ms. Brooke A. Levin
Director, Public Works
City of Oakland

Cc: Libby Schaaf, Mayor
Sabrina Landreth, City Administrator
Claudia Cappio, Assistant City Administrator
Larry Reid, City Council Member, District 7
Chip Johnson, San Francisco Chronicle
Matthias Gafni, Oakland Tribune
Robert Gammon, East Bay Express
Phil Matier and Andrew Ross, San Francisco Chronicle

Attachments: *see photos*

Subject: Oakland's Sequoyah neighborhood- abandoned by the city?

Dear Ms. Levin,

I find it unacceptable that neighbors in my area have been ignored by Public Works for the past two weeks. This has been typical, unfortunately, for years by other city departments. Recently, approximately 30% of Public Works staff have "called in sick". Apparently to protest that they are "not happy" that they enjoy some of the largest comparable salaries in the Bay Area and generous medical and retirement benefits.

A city spokesperson was recently quoted in print media that although up to 30% of public works staff have been calling in sick, it has not had any negative impact on services that homeowners are paying for—through some of the highest property taxes in the Bay Area. If that is the case then why aren't these presumably unnecessary positions eliminated immediately?

That aside, why has my neighborhood been abandoned? Is this because we're largely a middle-class working neighborhood with a higher than average number of retired seniors on fixed incomes? Is it because we're not affluent or is it because we're merely identified as residents that can be ignored while more affluent neighborhoods receive the same city services that we're paying for?

The attached photos provide a good example. The market at 7980 Mountain Boulevard (cross-street Shone) hasn't had the garbage emptied in more than a week. Why not? If I went to Montclair Village or Lower or Upper Rockridge, or the Claremont area, would I find any overflowing trash cans in those more affluent neighborhoods? That's rhetorical—I wouldn't of course and you know that. I drove these areas this morning and they're all spotless as usual—as they should be.

In my neighborhood we have the "cruddy" old brown-painted concrete trash enclosures while the more affluent areas have very nice trash enclosures and benches that aren't plastered with unsightly advertising. Market owners in Oakland are required to pay a special tax that the city insists is for the "extra" services needed so if that's the case then why haven't you contracted out for additional services to ensure that services paid for are being provided?

I suspect that if I went around and neatly bagged up all of this trash and set it alongside the road in front of your or the mayor's house, at the steps of city hall, or in a more affluent area, that city staff would miraculously appear within no time and have it all collected.

Why does a less affluent area of the city—though they pay plenty of property taxes, are civically-engaged, and volunteer as much as any other area—continue to be ignored when it is convenient? If it wouldn't be too much trouble, could our neighborhood be treated similarly to more affluent areas that seem to get extremely good service in comparison?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Mitchell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Donald J. Mitchell

President, Sequoyah Hills Oak Knoll Neighborhood Association (SHOKNA)



Market at 7980 Mountain Blvd. (cross street: Shone Ave.)

Image-01



Mountain Blvd. and Golf Links Road

Image-02



Corner of Mountain Blvd and Keller Ave.

Image-03