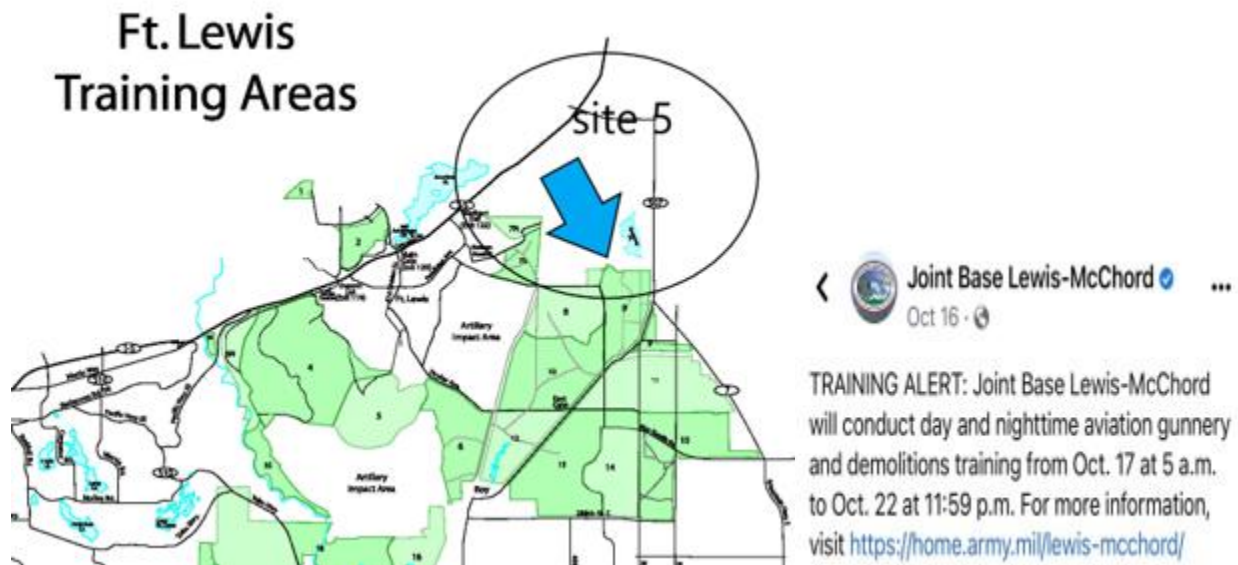


I saw your article in the 27 October Tacoma News Tribune. I am in favor of finding solutions for homelessness; this village concept might offer the missing hope and dignity to homeless people. **I am opposed to locating this project at its current proposed site.**

I visited the sites and do NOT agree with the developer's recommendation to use Site 5 at 176<sup>th</sup> and Spanaway Loop Road. I have worked in the construction management field. It is my opinion that the developer's weighted scores were skewed, and the commentary has significant omissions. I would expect Site 5 to be the most expensive to develop of the four. I could not see Site 4 as it was fenced off; Site 4 is OWNED by Pierce County (**an immediate \$3.7 million project cost reduction on land purchase plus the cost of fencing and roads that I could see onsite through the fence, and sewers are in the area**). The developer quotes in the Site Evaluation: "potentially lucrative 'sale' property for County...ideal for future residential development" (*but not suited for our homeless?*) Site 3 was evaluated but has "an unwilling seller," so was it really a potential alternate? Site 1 is a level, treed lot, well-located, within walking distance to a vast array of services, stores, employment, and is bordered by a fenced airfield for small aircraft. The noted adjacent "apartment complex" is a small group of single units (about 8 or 10).

Site 5 borders the Fort Lewis training areas 8 and 9, complete with tanks, soldiers, heavy artillery, and bears. The BOOMS rattle home windows. There is constant gun fire from hunters' rifles in the fall and warfighters target shoot at an active nearby range operated by JBLM; US Army training exercises are conducted day and night. Heavy artillery firing that seriously rattles windows is common. **Low flying military aircraft cross DIRECTLY over the homesite area on final approach to McChord Airforce Airfield**—the runway is VERY CLOSE this site.

This is FAR from the "therapeutic and tranquil environment" Executive Dammeier is touting for mentally ill/drug addicted people commonly suffering trauma and PTSD. Yes, it's in the trees, but so are the other sites.



  165

118 Shares

Most relevant ▾



While I understand the need for training, this summer has been the worst. It seems like it has been 24 hours straight - every couple of minutes. I feel like I am in a war zone. People can hear it over my headset during my meetings. My dogs are on Xanax. I am running on Red Bull from the lack of sleep. You would think we are being invaded.



Sure would be nice if they could limit this crap to once a month at most. Have lived here all my life and they never used to train this much. I hate having to drug my dogs so often but the booms scare the crap out of them.

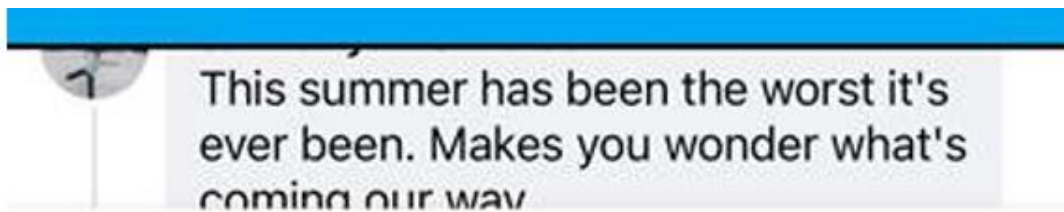
9w Like Reply




12  



replied · 4 replies

It's nice to know we have some peace tonight and then it starts over tomorrow



<  Joint Base Lewis-McChord  ...  
Aug 2 · 

TRAINING ALERT: JBLM will conduct day and nighttime demolitions and mortar training from Aug. 3 at 12 a.m. to Aug. 5 at 11:59 p.m.

For more information, visit <https://home.army.mil/.../noise-and-public-disturbances>.

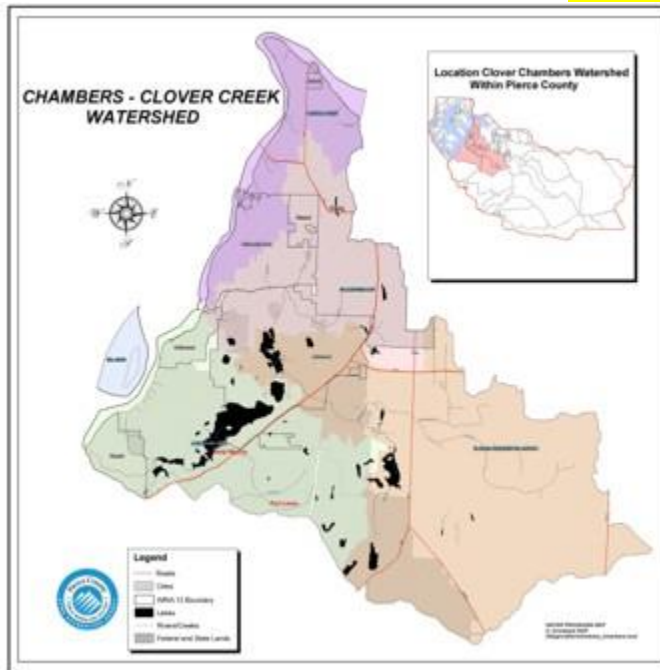


**How much vetting of the alternate sites was done to justify spending \$62 million—mostly taxpayer funds?** Were construction cost estimates and timelines run for other sites? The terrain, dense forest and extreme water-focused environment of Site 5 will generate engineering costs, zoning changes and mitigations that the other sites would not require. **The proposed site could be the most capital intensive, most engineering challenged, most costly to operate, has the most probability to get out-of-hand for cost overruns due to building in and on an extensive wetland system, the most expensive ongoing maintenance for septic systems, drain field repair and wetland clean up;** requires an over-water bridge to be built and maintained; requires continuous shuttle services to get people about a mile to the nearest public road; and there could be litigious consequences from not providing a safe environment for the community's vulnerable.

1. Developing Site 5 will have a high risk of contaminating the Pierce County watershed ecosystem. **The alternate sites were not located on such an environmentally sensitive wetland that is protected by**

**the Federal Clean Water Act, State RCWs and WACs, and Pierce County environmental/code regulations.** The proposed 86-acre site is part of the Chambers-Clover Creek Watershed ecosystem that encompasses waterbodies from Chambers to American Lake, Spanaway Lake and Joint Base Lewis/McChord. **It is a “National Wetland.”** The developer proposes to locate the village on a 27-acre parcel (the only potentially buildable area of the 86-acres) deep within the wetland complex and my mapping confirms that many of the structures will be on the wetlands and wetland buffers, which will require special County permission/developer mitigation (*this courtesy would NOT be allowed a private homeowner who cannot erect a shed if it is in close proximity to a wetland buffer*). According to the developer’s engineer, Pierce County’s zoning would not allow more than 1 home on ½ acre due to the need to use septic tanks. The density on this site – if allowed – would be approximately 15 people per acre.

- a. Septic Systems: Site 5 does not have public sewer in the area as is noted on the Site Evaluation. A large community **septic system** is planned. **Discharge from 284 buildings with toilets/sinks to support an upward capacity of 384 people** (100 homes are 399 SF and could be for couples according to Tacoma Rescue Mission), **5 community kitchens, and 10 community bath/laundry will be piped into community septic tanks discharging waste** – as a septic system does - **at this site**. The water table here is close to the surface. If a septic system leaks, it would be a large-scale aquifer disaster. (*I’m sure the septic installer will say septic systems are super safe, but they sometimes fail as do drainfields, and.... “What if.”*) With a complicated system of drainpipes plumbed to a community holding tank, who would know if they are leaking? The target residents suffer from addictions and mental illness, so there will be contaminants flushed into the system from pharmaceuticals and illegal drug use, that will enter the ecosystem via the drain field. *This is NOT a sober village. Sewer systems are available at other alternate sites.* **Why is Pierce County taking this risk?**

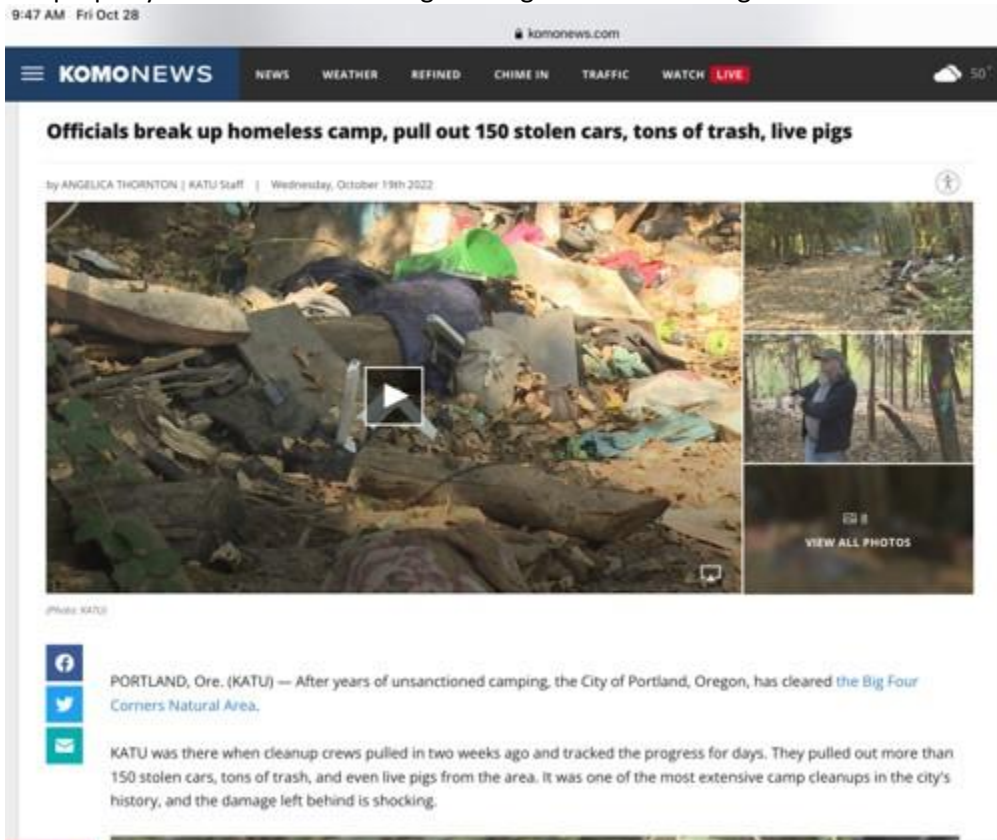


- b. Lake contamination: There will be a higher risk for health advisories for lakes and ponds from potential increases in cyanobacteria blooms and elevated E. Coli resulting from trees being removed from the wetland canopy, increasing ground water temperatures. Wetlands serve a vital role in this interconnected ecosystem. The developer thinks tree removal would



be a benefit “potential resource to use in development.” More canopy loss—more wetland destruction.

- c. Lack of control: How will Tacoma Rescue Mission’s volunteer force stop non-resident homeless from building unauthorized camps on the other 60 acres of unfenced wetland/wetland buffer? Who will clean up the wetland contamination this portion of the property? Look at the “shocking” damage to Portland’s Big Four Corners Natural Area.



2. Funding Not Secure: In a recent study session, three council members requested additional information as the capital and on-going operating funding was not secure. There was a sense of hubris on behalf of the presenters that ‘if we build it the money will come.’ They plan to build in stages – what happens if the benevolent donors don’t surface? Council member Young said unused Federal funds intended for pandemic relief aid will be diverted to this project; these funds are not an on-going revenue stream. Will Pierce County taxpayers be asked to pay the difference? The homeless are struggling; families are struggling to stay out of homelessness with this crippling 12% inflation.
3. Dangerous Wildlife: Mr. Dammeier quotes “...There’s no doubt in my mind that doing the village at that site - at that property in conjunction with the environment around it—that will be a far more conducive place for people who have been subjected to so much trauma to get well, to get healthy.”

Site 5 is located **within an ACTIVE BEAR HABITAT**. Bears – 200 to 350 pounds – roam and hunt on this site year-round (rarely hibernation this climate). **There is a den on this site.** *This is neither a scare tactic nor exaggeration.* From October on, hunters fill the adjacent Fort Lewis property,

shooting ducks, deer and bear. Bears have been captured by the Dept of Wildlife on the exact proposed housing location. Bear scat (poop) is abundant on the proposed village site, as are the many large-animal trails. *Can you imagine a mentally challenged or drug addicted person stepping out of their home for an evening walk or smoke and coming face to face with a 300-pound bear?* The bear might run or feel threatened and attack. **Fences will not keep bears out or people in.** What happens if a resident is shot accidentally by a hunter while walking on the adjacent property? Is this a “therapeutic environment”? I presented this information by email to the County Executive, Senior Counsel, Director of Human Resources and the County Council members but only two council members acknowledged receiving this critical site component information.

**JOINT BASE LEWIS-McCHORD (JBLM)  
IS  
BLACK BEAR COUNTRY!**

**HOW TO REDUCE CONFLICTS WHILE  
IN BLACK BEAR COUNTRY**

- **STAY AWARE AND BE OBSERVANT** – Make sure you look around when doing activities, e.g. berry picking, walking, jogging, camping, etc., in bear country. This is especially important if cubs are known in the area. Never get between cubs and their mother. This can avoid a close bear encounter. Remember, bears love berries.

- **IF YOU ENCOUNTER A BEAR** – Don't announce your presence and retreat slowly if the bear has not seen you. If the bear has detected your presence, speak softly and wave your arms so the bear can identify you as a human. If the situation permits, back away slowly, keeping a close eye on the bear. Otherwise, detour upwind of the bear and keep talking calmly.



- **DO NOT FEED BEARS** – Feeding bears conditions them to approach humans, which can lead to injuries.

- **DO NOT APPROACH BEARS TO TAKE PICTURES OR FOR ANY OTHER REASON** – Bears are wild animals! They are unpredictable. Use a telephoto lens for taking pictures.

- **BE CAREFUL WITH FOOD SCRAPS** – Clean up food scraps at your home and/or campsite after each meal. Dispose of them in trash cans or dumpsters (appropriate closed containers). Do not put food scraps or grease into a camp fire or throw them in the yard or woods.

- **FEED PETS INDOORS ONLY** – Bears have an excellent sense of smell and are drawn to pet food.

- **PROPERLY STORE FOOD AT YOUR CAMPSITE** – Store food in your vehicle truck or hang it from a tree limb 10 feet up and 4 feet out.



- **KEEP COOKING/EATING AREA SEPARATE FROM SLEEPING AREA** – These areas should be separate if you are camping with only a sleeping bag or tent.

Report bear sightings to the Military Police Dispatch  
at (253) 912-4303/2049/4446



These bear photos were taken about 300 yards from the HOUSING area of the proposed village at neighboring homes.

October 21, 2022 - mother and cub. Pried open a tub of vases. They have been on the site three times that we know of this past week.



10/2020 Mother- about 6' standing- and baby (trail cam video attached). Bears are attracted by berries, fruit trees, garbage, bird seed and dirty barbecue grills, all probable at the village. They roam and hunt up to 5 miles. Will this attract more bears to bother adjacent residential neighborhoods?



2018 - This bear was captured beneath a bedroom window.





I question how Pierce County thinks they can mitigate this. Bears climb fences. This was not at the site, but Google it for many bear climbing videos.



Cougars are rarely seen, but they are here. A neighbor saw one in this area within the last six months. *Washington Dept of Fish & Wildlife: "Cougars occur throughout Washington where suitable cover and prey are found... Cougars use...dense brush and forests -- to remain hidden while hunting. Adult male cougars roam widely, covering a home range of 50 to 150 square miles..."*



**Is this the tranquil environment envisioned by Executive Dammeier for people "who have been subjected to so much trauma?"**

Remote or Isolated? You indicate that "the site...is the most ideal of any analyzed by county officials due to its **"remoteness and therapeutic surroundings."** Residents will be isolated. They will need to walk about a mile from the housing area (about 20+ minutes) to get to the 176<sup>th</sup> – the nearest public road – through bear country. A bridge will need to be built (and maintained) to access the village. Will a shuttle service be available on-site 24/7? Where would non-driving residents go? There is little infrastructure close by other than three marijuana shops, a Multicare facility, three banks, an AutoZone, a few restaurants, a Sally's Beauty Supply, a gas station, a florist and a distant Dollar Store—about two miles away. Even the K-Mart closed in this neighborhood.

4. Zoning: This location is **not zoned for this purpose**. Pierce County has zoned this property low-density, single-family homes for a reason. **This village DOES NOT FIT within the County's own land-use rules**. Markets, commercial endeavors, support services, community kitchens, laundry, a farmers market, etc., **are not permitted in a Residential Resource area**. Pierce County last month changed their ordinances to permit tiny houses in this area so that they could proceed. During the October 18 Study Session, I heard one Council member state that he was for the proposal but wanted to do it according to Pierce County laws. **Does that mean that Pierce County leadership keeps changing the law until they make what doesn't fit....fit?**

Council member Mello says one option is to **rezone the site**. Your article quotes "Dammeier remained optimistic that the Council would release funding relatively soon and **pass the needed code change** to move ahead. The village's public engagement process has only recently started." On 10/27 the Council cancelled this neighborhood engagement meeting scheduled for November 9 for a date to be determined.

Visit the other proposed sites— they offer developable land with very fewer obstacles. **They each provide trees and a tranquil, therapeutic environment**. An easier site to develop means **getting homeless people housed FASTER**, and would provide an easier template to follow for the next village. Lower capital and operating expenditures gives Pierce County the **OPPORTUNITY TO HELP MORE HOMELESS** with its precious, limited taxpayer funds. A more appropriate site would have fewer "unknowns," homeless victims would not be isolated—in bear country with near constant sounds of warfighting, and the the County would not be putting the water table at risk. If I were an investigative reporter, I'd be asking ... **WHY THIS SITE that is fraught with obstacles and risk when Pierce County has other options**. Executive Dammeier seems **intent** on developing this site **regardless of existing Pierce County law** and the **best use of taxpayer dollars**. This SAME village concept *could be created faster and cheaper on a more appropriate site*.

I applaud Pierce County Council leadership for seeking humane, viable solutions to the homeless epidemic. Using \$64 million to build an experimental homeless village is a big gamble. Pierce County Council leaders have a responsibility to create the environment for their executive team to succeed. I'm certain with more site vetting, their well-intentioned team will find a more appropriate site that will give them a much higher probability of success. Good concept—Bad location.

Sincerely,

Sharon