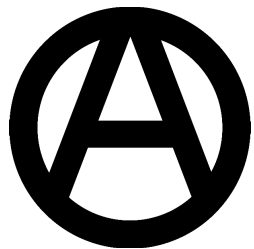


for the future. With this information, we can gather and share ideas of what we want to happen – whoever we are. There is no reason to rely on community leaders or formal organizations. We can meet with each other, with people who share experiences and affinity, figure out what kind of power and capacity we have, and decide what we want to do.

*Create free and illegal events and spaces.* Like the renegade movie night at the well, anyone is capable of putting together events and spaces that are free, open and refuse the city's rules. If gentrification means more and more events and spaces that cost money, then we can create more and more events and spaces that don't. This could be dance parties in the street, opening squats, anything imaginable.



**take back space  
against gentrification  
against capitalism  
against the state**

What is happening at the well?

anarchist analysis  
of Olympia's newest  
developments



The city has a vision for the artesian well. A year ago, the well was nothing but a parking lot with 24/7 access to free water, graffiti on all the surrounding walls, and a lot of street kids and houseless folks hanging out. In July 2013, the city formally turned the well into a city park. Since then, Olympia has spent almost \$150,000 renovating the parking lot to make it a business and shopper friendly area. The Olympian describes the former parking lot as “blighted” - a word that is defined as “infected, spoiled or neglected.” In the eyes of the city, the poor people who use the well are an infection. The city claims the space was neglected, as if the dozens of people who spend time at the well every day and night simply don't exist.

The grand opening of the new park, the “Artesian Commons”, happened in early May, 2014. The downtown ambassadors (Olympia's new soft police force) began working early in the morning to “get the place all squeaky clean” before the shoppers arrived. We all know what that means: to make sure there was no trace that poor people were ever at the well.

The downtown ambassadors, according to the Olympian, “will regularly patrol the new park” as part of the “ongoing struggle to create a safe and welcoming downtown for visitors.” Food trucks have been contracted to serve the park, and a toilet has been provided. The city says the goal is to make “a gathering place for people who live and work downtown,” a place to “socialize and dine.” But what about all the people who live downtown and on the streets of downtown who can't afford the trendy new food trucks? Even the toilet is not for their use – it hides behind a seven foot fence that is locked when the food trucks close and the shoppers head back to their houses.

The “Artesian Commons” officially closes at 7pm now – a completely new regulation on that space. At night, bright lights and loud music keep the people who remain illegally at the well from sleeping. The eyes of multiple surveillance cameras now sweep the area.

It's not just the renovation of the artesian well. The city of Olympia is not trying to hide the fact that the well is just one part of their larger plan for economic development. The city's “Downtown Project”'s listed goals are: parking makeovers, more aggressive graffiti and litter clean-up, increased policing, and alley “improvements.” The city has banned the sale of cheap alcohol downtown. They have

who never have anything to gain from the development that pushes them out of their homes and onto the streets, or pushes them off the streets and into the jail cells.

There are many ways to act concretely against gentrification. Action can take many forms, from talking to people with common concerns to burning down prospective developments. In Olympia, first steps could include:

*Disrespecting anti-homeless laws and ordinances.* We see how poor and homeless people are targeted by these laws for the sake of businesses. We can refuse to follow these laws. We can talk to people we know about not calling the cops. When we see the cops or the downtown ambassadors harassing people for sitting on the sidewalk or for busking, we can be present, record what is happening, defend the person and heckle the police.

*Vandalizing development.* Vandalism costs money to clean up, and threatens the places that are targeted. If the city wants the well to be a pristine space for capital workers to take a lunch break, we can make sure the experience is much less pleasant. This means graffiti and all kinds of other creative means. Leaving garbage in the street, killing decorative plants, and generally breaking things are effective ways of showing that we don't approve of their developments. And vandalism costs them money. Vandalism also reminds us that property is not untouchable, but is something that can be altered or destroyed. As powerless as property can make us feel, vandalism reminds us that we have the power to shape our environment.

*Autonomous self-organization.* We know what the city has done so far, and we can know what some of their plans are

out of the library, the well, or anywhere else downtown.

Then there's the RV Parking Ordinance, anti-busking and panhandling ordinances, the Noise Ordinance, walking police patrols and more and more.

We must remember and recognize that the state always tries to turn the people on the fringes of society into less of a threat. This often takes the form of including those people in capitalism, which both bolsters the state's image and pacifies the people who once posed a threat to society. For example, progressive cities are enthusiastically embracing formerly illegal activities such as guerrilla street art.

Street artists can either be bought off or locked up, and the punks and artists who were once shunned by society can be used as the new face of gentrification. Street art and murals make Olympia quirky and appealing to the young, hip, and upwardly mobile families that the city wants to live here. The kind of young hipsters who want to start local bookshops and used clothing stores where you can buy your grandpa's old sweater for 10 times what it cost in the first place. These street murals that were once subversive are now used to stop 'unacceptable' forms of graffiti from appearing. Graffiti that is ugly and uncontrollable remains illegal, because it remains a threat to the yuppies.

Development projects always use language like "safe," "clean" and "family-friendly." This language makes it hard for people to oppose the projects – after all, who doesn't want an area to be family-friendly? But these projects only benefit a certain kind of family. Development only makes an area safe for certain kinds of people, almost always at the expense of the poor, people of color, and houseless people

passed multiple laws and ordinances in the last few years that are targeted against the houseless and the poor.

All this together creates a pretty clear picture. Olympia is trying to come up. The city is intent on economic growth explicitly at the expense of the houseless and poor here. And they're using the oldest trick in the book: Gentrification.

We feel we must start this conversation by saying: Olympia is on stolen native land and gentrification is the urban grandchild of colonialism. As a primary actor for capitalism, gentrification attempts to disempower and disenfranchise poor people and people of color. It is important that people – regardless of their identity – involve themselves against gentrification in ways that make sense for them. Because while gentrification most impacts people of marginalized identities, it only benefits the rich, the property owners, the developers.

Gentrification and development are different but related concepts. Gentrification is used to describe focused economic development in an area or neighborhood to kick out the poor and make space for the rich. There is often a racial dynamic to gentrification, like when developers go into neighborhoods that are historically where people of color live, and try to push them out to bring in white families and white businesses. Development is – in this context, economic progress.

Gentrification is all of the changes that value economic development over any social interests. Gentrification is how the city can let condos be built for the rich while thousands of people remain unhoused. Gentrification is how a new microbrewery is opening while the city is making it illegal

to buy malt liquor downtown. Gentrification is how light poles get covered with cozy knit sweaters while people freeze on the streets. Gentrification is when the city works its ass off to cover up graffiti to make way for more civilized murals. It is how they can build cutesy parklets for shoppers to eat Jake's hot dogs, and then take them away when the "wrong" crowd is hanging out there.

And we must not forget: Gentrification is increased policing downtown. It is the immense effort the city of Olympia is putting into locking up anyone they think is "undesirable" and increasing surveillance.

Gentrification attempts to hide poverty – a reality that capitalism creates – to make "safe" and "comfortable" environments for the rich.

Recent years have seen several new laws and ordinances that target the poor and criminalize homelessness. Clearly the city's goal here is to make downtown more comfortable and appealing for wealthy consumers and business owners. Some of the laws even explicitly don't apply to those patronizing commercial establishments.

The sit and lie ordinance says that it is technically "pedestrian interference" to rest on the sidewalk. As if there isn't enough space for people to hang out on the sidewalk and for people to walk by. You may lie in a park, but if you want to use a blanket you can be put in jail. In 2006, the city installed speakers to play music at the transit center to stop people from congregating or resting there, either. The same tactic is now being used at the well. New cameras in Sylvester park and at the artesian well help to enforce this ordinance and others.

The Olympia Downtown Association, the Olympian and others have stirred up a panic about "public drunkenness," and a supposed "heroin epidemic." Generally the media almost constantly has a story running about the horror of discarded needles downtown. They act as though alcoholism or drug use started yesterday. The thing is, if you don't have much money, odds are you'll be spending a lot of your downtown leisure time outside, perhaps doing things that are fun (and not so different from what people with more money are doing) but not exactly legal.

The city council passed an ordinance creating an "alcohol impact area" downtown which bans the sale of specific alcoholic beverages (read: "cheap booze"). This ordinance doesn't apply to the sale of these beverages inside of a bar. So yuppies in a bar can have Olde English, but if you don't want to don't want to pay double the price, the city says: Take a hike.

Alcoholism and drug addiction amongst both housed and unhoused people is a serious issue. But banning malt liquor or increasing drug arrests won't solve the problem. Widespread drinking is a symptom of a much deeper problem. It's called capitalism. Many people drink or use drugs - at home, in bars, or under bridges - to cope with the painful, depressing reality of everyday life.

The new drug free zones cover almost the entirety of downtown Olympia. If you get caught dealing, using, possessing or buying drugs downtown, you'll receive increased fines, potentially being banned from the downtown area, and an extra two years on your sentence. The drug free zone laws target homeless people because people who have homes don't need to deal, buy or use drugs