



# TALE OF TWO CITIES

Is New York safer than Seattle?  
Elizabeth M. Economou finds it might be so

**FOR THE PAST MONTH** or so I've been walking from my apartment on Lower Queen Anne to my office near Pike Place Market. Since returning to my native Seattle from New York City six months ago, my husband and I have tried to maintain somewhat of a pedestrian lifestyle. ¶ In Manhattan—on the Upper East Side where I lived for nearly a decade—I scooted about my daily business without worrying much about where my route took me. I walked seven or eight miles, several times a week: to work, to the grocery store, and to favorite cafés and restaurants. Throughout, I felt surprisingly safe in that city of 8 million people. ¶ Not so in Seattle. ¶ Every morning, I strategically map out my two-mile path to work to avoid drug dealers and aggressive panhandlers. I choose my streets wisely—and carefully plot which side to walk on—and that varies from day to day. It seems at every turn vagrants are huddled in doorways, at bus stops and even in Counterbalance Park. Not too long ago, I saw a young man with a straggly ponytail sprawled against an overflowing trash bin in front of Kidd Valley, while another man rolled a joint nearby. One morning, I witnessed a middle-aged woman with disheveled hair perched in a tree in front of the Patagonia store, seemingly not knowing where she was. ¶ As I near my destination, I go by Victor Steinbrueck Park—a gorgeous viewpoint where Elliott Bay provides a sparkling backdrop and the city's top tourist attraction is

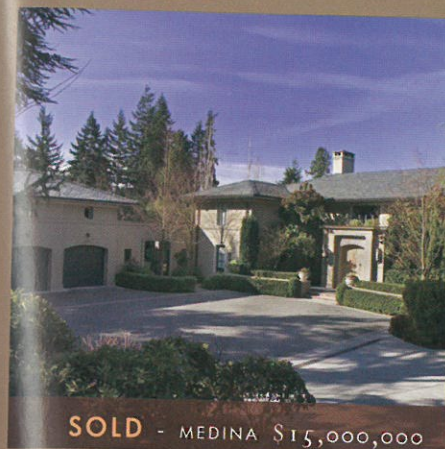
just steps away—and I'm simply slack-jawed that hand-to-hand drug exchanges are made unabashedly and with great aplomb almost beneath signage that reads "DRUG-FREE ZONE."

And throughout my journey—in the morning, at lunchtime and after work—I'm confronted with a mind-numbing number of panhandlers in Lower Queen Anne, Belltown and downtown. I understand the sentiment behind a comment made by City Council member Peter Steinbrueck: "I bristle at the growing intolerance of the poor. When we lose compassion for panhandlers it's a form of insensitivity to the problems they face." But I wonder—does he walk to work every day and see what I see?

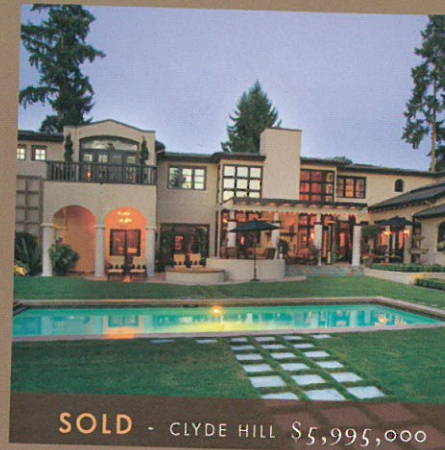
While panhandling and drug dealing are unpleasant annoyances, we've also had frightening violent incidents. In July, my pharmacist husband was held up at gunpoint at work in a Capitol Hill drugstore—something he never experienced in New York. A few months ago, during an early dinner at Belltown Bistro, a homeless man wearing baggy clothes grabbed decorative table lamps and smashed them directly in front of us. Not a single police officer in sight. Last July, bullets flew on Third and Pine in front of McDonalds. The 25-year-old victim was shot four times. In response, Seattle Police Chief Gil Kerlikowske said he intends to add 150 new officers in the next eight years.

No doubt more cops will help, though I'm doubtful that these will be large enough in number to make a real difference. Our mayor, bent on making downtown a 24/7 city, doesn't seem to grasp the thrust of the crisis. There seems to be a profound disconnect between his urban vision for a world-class city and the reality of excessive drug dealing, relentless panhandling—and violence.

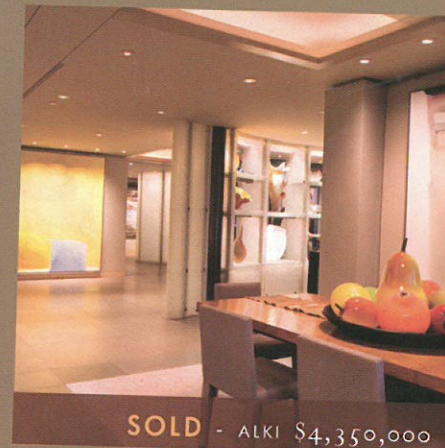
For me, I just can't understand what's happened to my old city, where I once felt relatively safe. I'm not ready to move back to Manhattan, but the suburbs are looking more and more attractive. ●



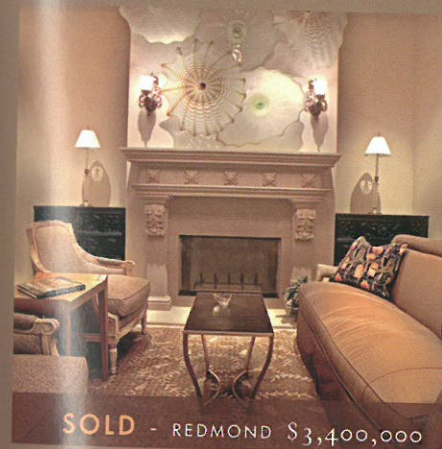
SOLD - MEDINA \$15,000,000



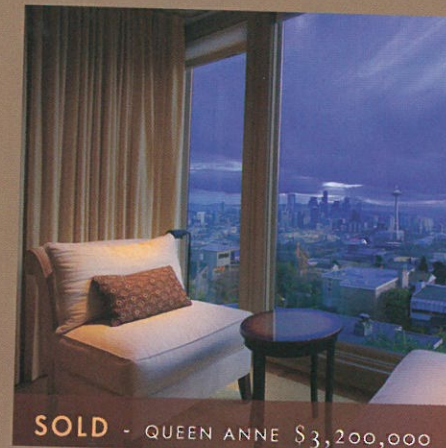
SOLD - CLYDE HILL \$5,995,000



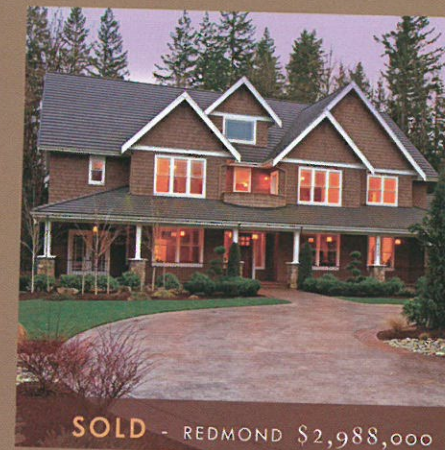
SOLD - ALKI \$4,350,000



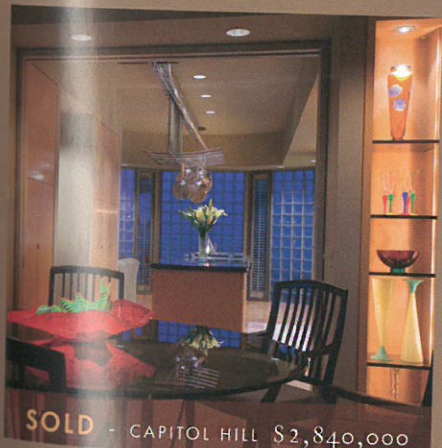
SOLD - REDMOND \$3,400,000



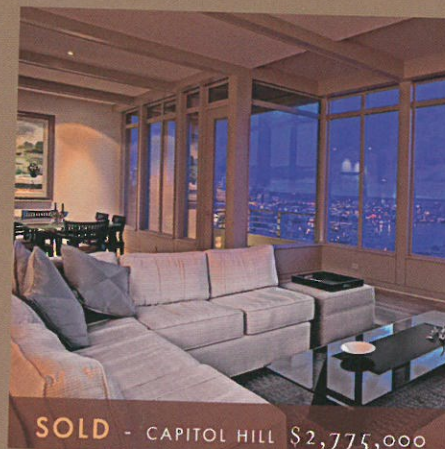
SOLD - QUEEN ANNE \$3,200,000



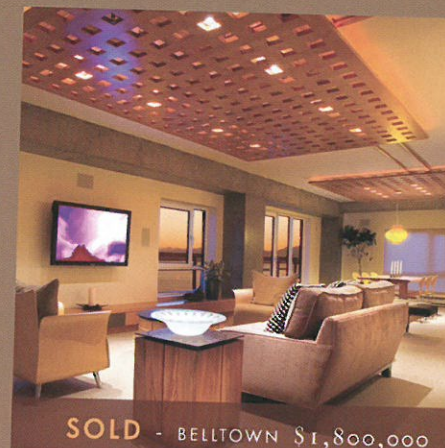
SOLD - REDMOND \$2,988,000



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