

RE: 'CHOP SHOPS' IN THE ENCAMPMENT AT STRATHCONA PARK

'Chop Shops' are open-air locations where bicycles (often stolen) are disassembled, stripped or sold without permits. Multiple bicycles and bicycle parts are present.

Criminal charges and prosecution for chop shops

- It is extremely challenging to prove that a bicycle is stolen.
 - o Thieves will file down the serial number of a bike and will claim that they 'found' it.
 - o Even if bicycles have the serial number intact, there is no way to identify the owner.
 - o Despite this, we engage in projects and/or respond to incidents with chop shops where charges are forwarded to Crown. Usually this involves higher-end bicycles.
- Challenging to obtain evidence to support charges, given nature of the offences and reluctance and resistance by the encampment community.
- Evidence gathering for bike theft would be resource intensive. This type of resourcing would be challenging right now with other priority public safety issues requiring police, like investigating hate-crime, targeting fentanyl trafficking, responding to COVID-related crime trends and addressing street disorder in Yaletown and the West End.
- Resources to effectively dismantle a chop shop and recommend charges would necessitate a reallocation of police resources, while other more pressing matters exist.

Additional considerations

- Residents are encouraged to register their bikes through Project 529 to allow their bikes to be identified if they go missing. However, not all owners register their bicycles.
- Every year the VPD auctions off approximately 1,700 bicycles because there is no way to identify the owner.
- Although this number has dropped significantly since the launch of Project 529, it remains a significant hurdle when trying to advance criminal investigations and charges against bicycle thieves and chop shops.
- VPD will continue to respond to 911 calls, including instances when community members can identify stolen property.