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A TOWN WITHOUT PITY

Seattle lures police candidates from other cities

*How can we keep love alive
How can anything survive
When these little minds tear you in two
What a town without pity can do.*

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By Julius (Jay) Wachtel. “The Emerald City.” Sounds enticing, doesn’t it? But don’t let that fool you. Neither software giant Microsoft nor coffee king Starbucks got where they did by being nice to competitors. Why should the community that hosts their world headquarters, Seattle, be any different?

It’s not. That huge [billboard](#) isn’t in Seattle or, indeed, anywhere in the Pacific Northwest. It’s on the opposite side of the continent, in New York City, not far from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, a branch of the City University of New York that educates the cops and corrections officers of the Eastern metropolis.



Why would Seattle be looking for cops in the Big Apple? Why would the yuppie kingdom dispatch recruiters three-thousand miles to give a full range of entrance exams and chat up potential candidates? Maybe it’s because the sharks smell blood. In a June 2005 tussle with the police union, New York cut the [salaries](#) of academy rookies forty percent, to the pitifully low level of \$25,100. Meanwhile, [Seattle’s officers](#), whose cost of living is a full *twenty percent lower*, start at nearly twice as much, \$47,335, with a [plan](#) to increase that to \$64,000 by 2010.

But wait a minute. Are New York’s finest secretly rooting for the bad guys, hoping that Seattle proves their point? If so, they’re playing a dangerous game. Slumping city revenues caused by problems on Wall Street make salary hikes unlikely in the near term. In the meantime NYPD has been hemorrhaging so many officers that its authorized strength was recently [slashed](#) by *one-thousand* positions. And why not? The department is already short more than twice that many cops, with no relief in sight.

Seattle PD isn't the only agency probing the ends of the Earth in pursuit of warm bodies. When not prowling L.A. college campuses Phoenix PD has been [luring prospects](#) at the University of Toledo (yes, in *Ohio*.) According to a PPD spokesman, "The quality of candidates [in Toledo] is fantastic. This is a goldmine for people like us...There is an abundance of people here looking for jobs. It's a perfect marriage."

What's the difference, you ask? Plenty. Seattle is shamelessly taking advantage of salary differentials to steal away recruits from a city beset by a shortage of police. On the other hand, Phoenix, one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the U.S., has targeted an area of high unemployment. Hard-hit by a decline in manufacturing, Toledo isn't gaining residents; it's losing them. Its police aren't hiring. Unlike Seattle, Phoenix isn't bleeding a community dry: it's doing it a favor.

Is the "Emerald City" embarrassed? Au contraire. As recruiter [Monique Avery](#) bragged to a *New York Daily News* reporter, "We get people who go, 'Whoa! It's going to take me a long time [in the NYPD] to get to even your beginning salary.' And our cost of living is a lot less." It turns out that this isn't Seattle PD's first crack at Gotham. Last year a smaller mission proved so successful that they couldn't wait to return to steal more candidates. And that's not all: this time around they're also going for *in-service* officers. "We are not coming to New York to specifically target NYPD officers," Monique said. "I pray that they get a huge raise. They are definitely welcome to apply, but we are encouraging everyone who is interested to apply."

Coming to New York but *not* targeting the NYPD? Praying that NYPD officers get a *raise*? Instead of hustling for Seattle, Monique ought to be in politics. She seems amply qualified!

What to do? According to the Seattle city [website](#), Mayor Greg Nickles wants to hear from you. So don't disappoint him! Tell him exactly what you think of this thoughtless, opportunistic behavior. While you're at it be sure to remind him that cities aren't like Microsoft and Starbucks: they're public trusts, whose behavior is measured by a different yardstick.

Just in case that while using Windows™ and sipping a Pike Place Roast™ he might have forgot.