

North Portland Neighborhood Associations Joint Statement on Homelessness

May 8, 2020

North Portland communities are deeply concerned about the crisis of homelessness and our neighbors who are victims of it. This crisis has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 epidemic.

We are incredibly grateful to those volunteer organizations that help and serve people living in camps, whether in their cars, RV's or tents. We are heartened that The Oregon Convention Center, Charles Jordan Community Center, Mount Scott Community Center and East Portland Community Center have been brought into service to provide some shelter. We applaud the use of the Jupiter Hotel, partnering with Multnomah County, for those experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 who need a place to shelter. The city's project to establish three organized emergency outdoor shelters is a good model, but must be expanded dramatically.

These efforts are meaningful, but they only scratch the surface of the problem, and we believe a much more substantial effort is required to build the community that all citizens deserve. Long-term solutions such as increasing housing stock, reducing the upward pressure on rents, and protecting tenants' rights may bend the arc of the homelessness problem over the course of years, but we don't have that kind of time. Portland's residents are suffering now. This is a social and public health crisis now.

The undersigned organizations request prompt action on the following solutions:

Short-term:

- Increase the availability of housing in supportive motels/hotels for vulnerable populations - especially families with children and the sick.
- Expedite permitting for the private effort to bring the Wapato facility into prompt service.
- Continue to create safe, sanctioned locations for camping, with immediate substantial increase in short-term support for residents, including:
 - portable toilets
 - hand washing stations
 - regular garbage pick-up
 - masks for COVID-19
 - hand sanitizers/wipes

Long-term:

We believe that the establishment of multiple safe, legally sanctioned, managed camps throughout the city, such as Dignity Village and Kenton Women's Village, will serve our overall community. These sanctioned camps should accommodate tent as well as car/RV camping. In addition to the basic sanitation needs above, managed camps should provide:

- More substantial sanitation such as showers.
- Direct access to public transportation.
- Managed self-governance.
- Access to social services, including referrals to drug and alcohol counseling, employment issues, physical and mental health services, and straightforward access to school for children within the community.
- A place for every person who needs one.
- Transition services to permanent housing for all residents.

As part of the both short-term and long-term solutions, we request that the City of Portland:

- Clear campsites located in parks, waterways and public paths, as well as camps where illegal activity has been documented.
- Install managed camps in all sextants of the city. Each neighborhood should be held accountable to participate in the process by identifying appropriate locations for local managed camps.

We look forward to working with you to achieve the kind of city we all deserve.

Signed,

Bridgeton Neighborhood Association

Arbor Lodge Neighborhood Association

Overlook Neighborhood Association

University Park Neighborhood Association

Pending vote:

Kenton Neighborhood Association