

From: Bree <clemmersons@gmail.com>
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To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Concerns for Meeting on 8/8/2024

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Concerns Regarding the Proposed Relocation of Unhoused Individuals to the South Side

Dear Members of the City Council,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed relocation of unhoused individuals to the South Side. As a resident near the proposed sites and a frequent user of Sherwood Park, I am deeply concerned about how this plan could impact both the accessibility of local amenities and the broader well-being of our community.

1. Impact on Local Amenities: The relocation plan could significantly restrict access to essential community spaces such as Sherwood Park. This park is not only a crucial recreational area for local residents but also a safe, accessible place I rely on for outdoor activities. Losing easy access to this park would be particularly distressing for someone like me, who has been in the neighborhood only a month and values the ability to walk to nearby amenities without the need to cross a highway.
2. Perception of Exclusion: Relocating our unhoused neighbors to the outskirts of the city might inadvertently communicate that they are being pushed out of the community, fostering a sense of exclusion rather than inclusion. While the intention may not be to "out of sight, out of mind," for residents like myself living in the South Side, these issues remain very "in my sight, and in my mind". The biggest question on my mind being why the focus isn't on providing actual assistance and stable solutions for these individuals, rather than repeatedly moving them from one location to another without addressing the underlying issues?
4. Need for Reevaluation: The increasing number of unhoused individuals in our community signals the ineffectiveness of current strategies, highlighting an urgent need for new approaches that focus on long-term solutions rather than temporary fixes. This growing issue calls for a comprehensive review and implementation of sustainable support systems, including mental health services and medical care. The fact that the unhoused population continues to expand rather than decline raises serious concerns about our community's commitment to addressing and resolving the root causes of homelessness.
5. Successful Models: Numerous cities have shown that initiatives such as "tiny homes" can provide safe, dignified, and permanent housing solutions that effectively support the reintegration of unhoused individuals into society. Importantly, these initiatives do not necessarily require funding from taxpayers; there are many innovative funding models that can be explored. The persistence of the housing crisis indicates that as a community, we may not be exploring enough diverse solutions, often defaulting to temporary relocations or constructing high-cost, low-capacity housing developments. This approach is not only inefficient but fails to address the scale of the problem. It's crucial to consider more cost-effective, large-scale solutions that can accommodate more individuals and truly alleviate the burden of homelessness.

I urge the City Council to consider these points and to adopt innovative and compassionate strategies that tackle the root causes of homelessness. Reflecting on the origins of this crisis, researching solutions implemented by other communities, and scrutinizing the effectiveness of current spending are crucial steps. For instance, the funds allocated for a minimally used bike lane downtown could have been directed towards more impactful projects. By investing in comprehensive support systems and permanent housing solutions, we can uplift every member of our community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I am hopeful for a strategy that reflects our shared values of empathy and community support.

Sincerely,

Sabrina Clemmerson