



REVITALIZE PORTLAND COALITION'S RESPONSE TO MAYOR WHEELER'S NEW PLAN FOR HELPING SOLVE HOMELESSNESS IN PORTLAND

RPC applauds Mayor Wheeler's new resolve to reduce homelessness in Portland. His proposals include the creation of three sanctioned camping sites capable of holding up to 500 people; an 18-month phased-in ban on unsanctioned camping; a diversion program for low level offenders to avoid criminal and punitive sanctions; and a goal to spend \$9.8 billion to create 20,000 affordable housing units by 2033. We support the city's plea that the county and state take on their share of the responsibility for these solutions.

Some of the proposals align with RPC's 9-point plan found at our website, www.revitalizeportland.com. We hope the city council will move quickly on approving this package. But while the mayor's efforts are to be recognized, some refinements of the policy proposals are necessary. RPC encourages the following considerations:

- **Sanctioned Camping Sites and long-term solutions.** While we agree a quick-response and short-term solution is needed, RPC fears the longevity of sanctioned camping given the low barrier to entry and disorderly systems. Earlier this year, the City of Eugene closed its two sanctioned camping sites on city property, as they simply became unmanageable. We recommend focusing efforts on expanding shelter bed capacity and the safe rest villages that the City has been promising for years.
- **Affordable Housing is Not the Issue.** The whopping \$9.8 billion price tag for 20,000 units of affordable housing pencils out at \$490,000/unit. This is more than the average price of a home in Portland. The status quo plan must be revised to include all types of housing, shelter, and services. Imagine how much further our money could go if we take care of those living on our streets first.

As the representative of commercial and multi-family real estate professionals across Portland, RPC suggests the following additional ideas:

Transparency and Accountability. There is \$500 million available for mental health treatment and housing through the Oregon Health Authority and Metro's housing bond. But there is no clear information on how the tax dollars are being spent. We support a public/private entity at the county level, to review, evaluate and ensure that public funds are laser-targeted to this crisis. Taxpayers should have confidence that these funds are being spent efficiently and effectively.

De-Fund the Joint Office of Homelessness. Speaking of lack of accountability, the Joint Office was required to adopt Built for Zero's database methodology two years ago. We have no evidence of progress on this promising approach, and the status of Portland's involvement is in question. Instead, the JOHS is funding tents for distribution to those experiencing homelessness. People suffering in the streets need stabilization and treatment, not tents. The City's funds to the Joint Office should be withheld.

The Revitalize Portland Coalition stands ready and willing to speak further on these issues and ideas. Our members and collective organizations are impacted directly by these policies, and we look forward to our continued, collaborative efforts.