

Sanctioned Camps in Portland (testimony 10/25/2022)

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I've long suspected that mayor Wheeler has aspired for Portland to emulate Los Angeles whose downtown area is divided between a business friendly financial district and 'skid row' – an area overrun by homeless tents. Whether this paranoid thought is justified or not such motives do seem to be at play, be they through the mayor or others – intentional or otherwise.

Some points in regard to this proposal,

1) Homeless classes complement domestic classes, and the two should not be segregated from one another as large 'sanctioned' camps would do. These are two points I'll not try to justify rigorously here. Suffice it to say that free markets love free birds just as nature utilizes diversity to compliment and strengthen her systems rather than forcing some uniform definition of sameness onto them. People need freedoms to fail as they do to succeed; they require freedom to define what failure or success is for themselves; they just require freedom. And the day you see a free bird caged for failure to abide by the popular way of living is the day that way of living ceases to be one that has much to do with freedom. How we treat homeless folks is how we can and eventually will come to deal with housed citizens. It is then a selfish rather than a selfless act to preserve and defend our homeless neighbors freedoms.

Yet another selfish interest we ought to defend here is the very notion of public lands. When one relatively small plot of land becomes 'sanctioned' the other larger portion of remaining lands, de facto or otherwise, then become 'unsanctioned'. Permitting use of such terminology being applied to lands threatens to reinforce the already problematic notion that 'public lands' are increasingly instead coming to be considered 'government lands'.

2) Overlooking that Portland has numerous geographical differences to southern California, the market forces which helped shape downtown Los Angeles are very different than market forces today, both in Portland and Los Angeles. Since COVID professional classes are leaving downtown areas in droves. This is not a trend the city can nor should try to reverse. Prior to COVID humans were being shoved into urban centers on scales unprecedented in human history – a thing that has caused unnatural problems and forms of human suffering. There is also the fact that in-person work has aided in the proliferation of medieval European guild structures which have taken root and come to control our job markets¹. The information economy will establish its own form of classism to be sure, but the age of professional society will begin to slowly unwind in a fashion reminiscent to how its predecessor (medieval guilds) were allowed to gradually die off. There is also the fact that decentralized monetary systems are beginning to take root.

Because times are changing in these regards, the proposal lacks any sustainable motive force

¹this is yet another thing I'll make no attempt to justify rigorously here.

to drive it in the future. There will not be any business dominated financial sector in the downtown area to point to, and there will inevitably be a corresponding lack of sustained will to herd houseless into one section of town.

3) the proposal is founded on subjective cultural agendas rather than unbiased ideals of public service.

To this end I ask the reader to consider the difference between congregate sleeping and congregate camping – a subject which was once the topic of a communication of mine to Ted (close to the very first communications ever given to Ted as he took office as mayor).

When I made use of a tent I wanted to have not just my own tent, but my own area. But there were other times when I just felt outnumbered and wanted to reconnect with the community, and in these times I found myself lamenting the dismantling of congregate sleeping and day-spaces. The two are distinct forms of congregation and ought to be recognized as distinct forms of outdoor shelter. We do not conflate private housing for public shelter, so why should we conflate the two forms of congregation just because it occurs outside?

When people lack tents I've found it to be natural that they find seek safety in numbers; in one another rather than tents. Conversely, if people have tents then they've found at some modicum of safety in the construction of their own shelter. At this point what incentive is there for them to congregate with other campers? There are few practical motives for them to do so. On the contrary I find the use of tents instead can lead to hoarding of goods, territorial-ism , isolation (a motive for degenerate habits), and tents grant privacy (opportunity for degenerate habits). Instead, forcing tent-dwellers to congregate en mass must substitute any attempt to appeal to natural human motive for the use of force. Ergo, forcing tent-dwellers to congregate would just be to force a subjective cultural agenda – a preference – onto them.

...unless of course we claim that objectively studying the issue is the goal. But were this the case why is it that public dialogue has been sabotaged with obscurely defined notions of 'camping' which is not being recognized as discernibly different than sleeping unencumbered by tents? Are there no reasons to suspect the two produce different dynamics?

If we believe the two forms of congregate overnight shelter are fundamentally different in some ways which are worthy of noting, why has our notion of outdoor shelter been restricted to Dan Ryans pods while successful experiments like R2D2 are shut down and forgotten? This bias targeting and restriction on forms of outdoor shelter is yet another reason to sue the city for negligently refusing to utilize all of it's resources to address the issue and instead have allowed it to be relegated onto public sidewalks.

Mayor Wheeler is quoted in this weeks paper,

“...This thinking is deeply misguided...The fact is, for the past eight months, we've increased alternative camping options without a ban, and to be completely transparent, it has not worked.”

I beg you all consider how justified this accusation is when our variables have been far from controlled – too many things have been getting changed simultaneously to say for certain whether it was one or the other which caused the end outcome. What experimentation we've embraced hasn't

been diverse, creative, or objective in terms of methods. Our goals have been political and cultural rather than than open-ended and inquisitive.