

From: [David Dickson](#)
To: [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)
Subject: Written Testimony in support of Mayor Wheeler plan to address homelessness
Date: Wednesday, October 26, 2022 11:50:42 AM

My name is David Dickson. I am a Downtown Portland resident and serve as the co-chair of the Downtown Neighborhood Association Homeless/Houseless Team. I am supportive of Mayor Wheeler's plan. For 3 years our Homeless/Houseless Team has advocated for Portland Street Response, Bybee Lakes Hope Center, the Metro Homeless funding ballot measure, and other initiatives that would support both the quality of life in downtown and our unhoused neighbors on the street. In addition we have run for two years a Good Neighbor Project, where 25-30 volunteers visit our unhoused neighbors in the downtown on a weekly basis, providing survival gear and building relationships.

Everyone will surely find something they do not like about the Mayor's plan, but bottom line, it is a comprehensive plan which addresses the need for fast-tracked affordable housing, temporary shelter that offers sanitation, safety and behavioral health services, and at the same time promotes cooperation among city, county, metro, state and federal players, something that has been grossly lacking to date.

I will do everything I can to support the plan and encourage others to do so. When public officials stick their necks out to do controversial things, they need a parade of supporters behind them or their message will be drowned out by the usual mix of special interest groups, uncompromising zealots and people with an axe to grind.

In the past 2 years I have experienced the humanity of our unhoused neighbors first hand...in weekly visits on the street. I have heard stories of drive by shootings, rapes, deaths by overdose, and have worked with local churches to hold a memorial service for a double amputee who died in his tent. Unsheltered camping is not only a massive drag on Portland's quality of life, as evidenced by recent surveys and by simply walking the streets of the downtown. It is hurting and killing the very people whose "right to rest" we are so concerned about protecting.

It is time that we stop confusing compassion with neglect and take action to end Portland's unsheltered homelessness crisis!!

A couple specific points...

—Please offer a mix of high barrier, as well as low barrier, interim shelters.

Without an option to be sheltered in a high barrier shelter, (indoor or outdoor) no wonder unhoused folks express fear of being in shelters.

—I am tired of hearing the large outdoor camps represent a cruel "warehousing" of

people. Yes, I prefer smaller camps, especially self governed ones, but large camps offer a short term place for people to relocate from unsanctioned camps as they await transition to a more appropriate interim shelter. It is most important to provide intake services and get to know these people as they enter the system (as in Built for Zero) so they can be appropriately placed in safe transitional locations.

Thanks for listening. I will do everything I can to support the mayor's plan.

David Dickson