

From: [Daniel Newberry](#)
To: [Wheeler, Mayor](#); [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)
Subject: Public comment on houselessness support resolutions
Date: Thursday, October 27, 2022 1:28:57 PM

Dear Mayor Wheeler and members of the Portland City Council,

Thank you for the email yesterday outlining the resolutions for responding to Portland's increasing homelessness crisis. I congratulate you on taking bold steps. Although there are portions I support, there are several items on which I have serious reservations.

Before responding to each of your five key points, I want to offer thoughts on the plan to ban self-sited camps and forcing people to move to one of several large camps.

In my reading on and discussions with houseless folks and direct service providers, what rises to the top is the stress and fear for campers' physical safety. Many have been beaten or raped while living on the streets. They band together in camps often as a form of self-protection. When camps get to be a certain size, that bonding and neighborly support often dissolves.

Instead of creating a few large camps for 500+ individuals, please consider many more smaller camps--where safety that comes from smaller numbers of people--will protect and reassure our vulnerable neighbors. Yes, this will be tough, and it will require situating smaller camps in neighborhoods with a lot of opposition.

I do think that many areas, such as near schools and streams or natural areas should be off limits to camping. However, there are so many public areas where camping are a nuisance rather than a threat, that perhaps having a list of areas where camping is permitted--outside of established City-designated camps--makes sense.

What about people living in vehicles? They, at least, have some semblance of safety. I hope the new initiatives will not force them into limited areas. If a lot of those folks lose their vehicles, our tent camping population will swell!

1. [Establish key actions to increase affordable housing construction](#)

Affordable housing is key. Thank you for stating a bold goal and taking steps toward completion. Unfortunately, building more units is only part of the solution, as there is no way we can build our way out of the affordable housing crisis, when **existing institutional, structural barriers** stand in the way of success. In particular, I'd like to recommend the following:

A) All public dollars for affordable housing should require 100% affordable units. I have heard many times the mantra that "developers will only build these units if their profit needs are met" and this leads to new housing complexes that have 50% or fewer affordable units. If we allow developers to build market rate units in the complexes that contain affordable units, that takes up scarce space that could otherwise house affordable units.

B) Work to send a ballot initiative to statewide voters to overturn the ban in the state constitution that prohibits taxes/fees on real estate transactions. After this is complete, enact a hefty fee on residential sales that have sold in the previous two years that are not owner-

occupied. The purpose for all this would be to dis-incentivise "flipping."

C) Enact a fee on sales of multi-unit residential facilities of more than 10 units. The purpose is to disincentivize corporations from treating housing as a profitable revenue stream.

D) Put hefty fees on Airbnb units. Airbnbs in Portland (and elsewhere) take housing units out of the market for true residential purposes and make them available for short-term vacationing. This has become a serious problem in Portland, reducing the housing supply and therefore driving up the cost of housing.

2. [Assess options to increase coordination and enhance unhoused access to paid non-standard work](#)

I'm with you 100% here!

3. [Connect mental health and substance abuse recovery services to unhoused individuals](#)

I'm with you 100% here! This gets at an important solution to houselessness: separate out the people who are houseless because of mental health and addiction from those with solely economic issues.

4. [Create a diversion program for individuals experiencing homelessness](#)

In general, this sounds positive. The issue I see here is that I still think that people should only be sited for camping in those specific public areas where they pose a threat, like near schools or sensitive environmental areas (like near streams and natural areas).

5. [Set City budget priorities to implement affordable housing, connect homeless individuals with sanitary, mental health and substance abuse recovery services and request assistance from County, Metro, State, and Federal partners.](#)

Sounds good, but I'd like to see more details.

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