



November 1, 2022

To: Mayor Wheeler, Commissioner Mapps, Commissioner Hardesty, Commissioner Rubio, and Commissioner Ryan

Dear Mayor Wheeler and City Commissioners,

The Central Eastside Industrial Council is greatly encouraged by the Mayor's most recent plan to address our houseless neighbors, the impact of poverty, addiction, and the current mental health crisis within our City. The Central Eastside Industrial District is a major employment area within the City of Portland, with over 1,300 businesses and 22,000 employees. Many of these businesses provide median-wage manufacturing and distribution jobs, which are vital in promoting income equality and alleviating poverty in our region.

Over the past few years, we have worked with businesses impacted by COVID's economic impact, civil disruption, a proliferation of crime, an increase in outdoor residents moving into the district, and a visible rise in people with mental illness living on the street. We have talked with businesses that have chosen to leave the district due to street violence, crime, and the constant threat of a lack of safety.

Those who have remained in our district are being confronted with an unprecedented number of violent incidents involving people experiencing behavioral health crises. We've had reports of employees and patrons being verbally aggressed, punched, and threatened with violence. Many employers have struggled to get their employees to return to work in the district due to safety concerns around the vast number of houseless camps. Businesses are still struggling to keep their doors open, and many are operating with limited staff, putting an extreme strain on their ability to remain open.

Through Central Eastside Industrial Council's enhanced service district, Central Eastside Together, we have spent over \$6 million since 2019 supporting the houseless community with sanitation services, safety, and care to improve our business district. Our trauma-informed care has been seen as a model for other ESD's to use and balance the needs of outdoor residents and the business districts where they live. However, this model is only successful in the right environment. It is successful when the community is supported by city services such as law enforcement and sanitation. We have collectively failed to recognize what is required to build a thriving economic ecosystem that supports employees, employers, customers, and the community at large.

We urge the Portland City Council to approve the Mayor's recommendations to ensure Central Eastside business owners, employees, customers, property owners, and residents can build a more prosperous future. We trust that this new direction will ultimately be the best for our outdoor residents as we hold compassion for them and a vision for a better economic future. We hope that the City continues to explore solutions that respond to the concerns expressed by houseless advocates and service providers and find common ground and shared values as we pursue the highest good for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Cress".

Eric Cress  
Board of Directors President  
Central Eastside Industrial Council