Denver Homeless Out Loud

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Dear Robert McDonald and DDPHE staff,

Thank you for your reply to our letter. However, this reply still leaves us with the same questions and suggestions sent in our original letter. It does not answer any of our stated questions, requests, or concerns.

Residents of the encampment along 22nd slated to be closed tomorrow are still waiting to meet with you and/or other DDPHE decision makers. I am sure they would welcome other city department leaders also, but since DDPHE is leading this sweep and closure (at least from what we have been told) it is critical that DDPHE leaders be present. Will you be present tomorrow at the sweep to hear from residents?

You reference resources the City is working to provide for people who are homeless such as “health care, employment, and other supportive services that promote long-term housing stability, reduce recidivism, and improve quality of life.” Unfortunately, to the extent these resources exist they are only enough for the City to claim they are doing something rather than actually invest in meeting the need. 1% of the City budget went toward “affordable” housing (which is largely not even attainable for homeless people), whereas 40% of the budget went toward police, fire, and jails. Until those budget lines are flipped the City will not really be investing in making housing an option for people who are homeless.

We appreciate the recognition that not all areas where folks are staying are messy or cause any health concerns. Given this fact, again we would ask (as many of the camp residents are asking), why is a whole encampment being shut down and everyone kicked out when many of the tents and areas of the camp are totally clean? Does a whole apartment complex get shut down because one unit is messy? Punishing residents who work very hard to keep their area clean is not only cruel, it is counterproductive.

While DOTI does periodically come by and remove trash, this does not take place on a regular or predictable basis. Dumpsters with regular pickups would be far more effective at removing trash. Residents who are keeping their areas, or the areas of others, clean, are left to gather their trash in one area to the best of their ability, but without a dumpster to contain the trash or regular trash pick up, it is impossible to properly dispose of the trash.

Containing and dumping trash in dumpsters is one of the oldest City infrastructures which is so obvious it seems crazy we have to keep talking about it. This and other suggestions we included in our letter, as well as other suggestions residents would bring at a meeting, continue to be totally ignored with no attempt from any City department to seek real sustainable solutions.

We agree since there are many City departments involved in these sweeps it would be most effective to meet together with all the departments that make these decisions. We appreciate Councilwomen CdBaca’s office helping to convene this meeting and look forward to talking in person about real solutions at that time, if not before when you come to meet with residents of the encampment slated to be swept tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Denver Homeless Out Loud

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