

October 22nd Alliance to End Homelessness Press Release

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Beyond the Virginia Key Bantustan, reject any tiny homes plan that excludes homeless input

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While overwhelming, wide ranging opposition to the city of Miami's Virginia Key tiny homes proposal, including from this activist ([here](#) and [here](#)), may be sounding its well deserved death knell, there's yet no indication that the powerful city and Miami-Dade County forces who will ultimately present an alternative are on a path to offering a humane solution which centers the dignity and humanity of those they'd ostensibly be helping, namely the community of vulnerable and traumatized chronically homeless people surviving on the street.

But short of intensive and respectful engagement with those now sleeping in tents, some for years, no plan that comes without a promise of deeply affordable housing and supportive services will stand a chance of success. Even an interim solution by means of a tiny homes "transition zone," as the city has dubbed these spaces wherever they wind up, won't work if it's simply foisted on its so-called beneficiaries.

Guidance from the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), in its paper, "[Ending Homelessness for People Living in Encampments](#)," has long recognized and promoted humane best practices for transitioning people from the street to permanent supportive housing. Engagement with those living on the street is a key tenet of USICH's approach.

Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP), meanwhile, has provided a clear and cautionary analysis of the [shortcomings of sanctioned encampments](#) as a solution to homelessness.

In light of such well defined strategies for helping, and not helping, people experiencing homelessness, it's especially concerning that Miami-Dade County's leading voice on all matters pertaining to homelessness, Homeless Trust Chair Ron Book, has shown a strategic preference for what could be called, 'build it and they will come, or else.'

Last year, [Book was present](#) during at least one homeless encampment sweep during which homeless people's property was trashed, while Camillus House employees with vans were at

the ready to transfer people to shelter. Most chronically homeless persons opt against going to shelters which offer no long term solution to homelessness in highly controlled environments.

Last week, during a virtual town hall on the Virginia Key proposal hosted by Miami-Dade Commissioner Raquel Regalado, while joining others in opposing the plan, Book expressed support for the idea of a tiny home encampment in an appropriate location. But based on his laissez faire attitude toward the kind of strong-arm city of Miami tactics we've seen for a very long time, his leadership in this process needs to be questioned in no uncertain terms. It bears mentioning that the city was recently sued in federal court over its trashing of homeless people's property during last year's encampment sweeps.

With regard to Ron Book, it also bears mentioning that while he heads the lead county homelessness agency, the Homeless Trust, which is annually funded to the tune of over \$60 million, he also lobbies for the county, itself, and for the powerful and assertively anti-rent control Florida Apartment Association.

Need it be said, in a state which constitutionally denies local governments from passing rent control measures even in this moment of calamitous rent increases and lack of affordable housing, we will only have much more homelessness, and many more years of the Homeless Trust, to look forward to.