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Sent: Tuesday, June 15, 2021 6:07 PM

To: All Alders <allalders@cityofmadison.com>

Subject: Thoughts on Agenda item 80 (10 tiny homes) as a response to Reindahl Park encampments.

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Dear Alders,

My name is Evelyn Gildrie-Voyles. I live at 202 Farley Avenue in Madison, WI 53705. While I appreciate Alder Halverson's proposal to explore the cost and location for 10 tiny homes, this is an incomplete response to the problems that are leading people to camp at Reindahl. More housing is welcome but tiny homes are not an immediate solution. While they are being built, where will the unhoused people at Reindahl stay? Long term solutions must go hand in hand with short term solutions that focus on finding safer and more acceptable places for people to live outside. Perhaps encampments can be permitted on the land that will eventually contain tiny houses. I understand that "tent cities" is a loaded term but they are a way to provide shelter quickly. We can address the short term needs for our unhoused residents while working to create long term housing and 24 shelter options. Both are necessary. Below is the comment I gave at the June 9th Parks Commission meeting. These words apply to the tiny homes proposal as well. What is needed is a place for these people to stay NOW while tiny homes or other housing options are created.

As we come out of the COVID pandemic it is tempting to rush to a return to normal but normal for unhoused people in Madison wasn't working. Normal was pushing unhoused people into the shadows, and making them invisible. Not housed or sheltered just sleeping and living outdoors where they couldn't be seen. Unseen is not the same as nonexistent. Unseen is not safer for Madison. Unseen is merely a way to pretend that Madison is compassionate to our unhoused residents and to pretend that those who sleep and live outside are few and do it out of preference rather than necessity. We can't continue to pretend that everyone who wants permanent housing can get it because right now there are not enough apartments or housing available. We can't continue to pretend that everyone sleeping outside could be put in a hotel if they wanted because there are not enough hotel rooms available right now and as tourists and conventions start coming to Madison there will be even less hotels available. We can't pretend that people weren't camping in Parks, wooded areas or under bridges before the pandemic. Shelters do not work for everybody for a myriad of reasons. People were sleeping outside before the pandemic and if we break up the Reindahl Encampment, more people will go to places that are hidden and less safe for them and for Madison as a whole.

Hidden outdoor living means no access for emergency vehicles or first responders. It means difficult access for outreach workers, health care workers and volunteers. It means that unhoused people are isolated from each other and can not organize to build community or help each other. Hidden outdoor means less hope of the resources and stability needed to improve their situation.

Let us move to a new and better normal where we truly see and accept people as fully human regardless of their housing situation. Let us move forward with ordinance changes to create visible, accessible, and therefore more hopeful and safer outdoor options.

Thank you all for your time and continual work on ending homelessness in Madison.

With Gratitude,
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