

Dear Councilmembers,

We write to express opposition to Ordinance 21-06.

Homelessness is a serious issue, and the City should continue working in partnership with public, private and philanthropic organizations to create a compassionate and sustainable solution. Permitting camps for people experiencing homelessness in City parks or other designated public spaces is neither a sustainable nor compassionate solution.

If this ordinance is approved, the Council will be converting a number of our parks into campgrounds for people experiencing homelessness. This proposed ordinance will permit such encampments indefinitely – unless the City declares an ‘emergency’ exists at the park.

Our parks system is Bloomington's crown jewel. The ordinance appears to sanction the establishment of encampments at Bryan, Building & Trades, Rev Ernest D Butler, RCA Community, Seminary, Switchyard and Waldron, Hill & Buskirk Parks. Based upon the experience at Peoples Park and Seminary Park, these encampments will severely diminish the use of these public spaces by our citizens for the recreational purpose parks are intended to provide. We cannot believe the community is going to support such encampments in our neighborhood parks - - especially Switchyard Park having just spent \$35 million to build it.

We have a number of specific concerns about the draft ordinance's construction. For example, the purpose and scope of this ordinance is not clear at all. The “whereas” section refers to Monroe County statistics and “all persons experiencing homelessness.” Is this ordinance intending to open our City's parks for camping to **anyone** experiencing homelessness or just Bloomington residents? We have other concerns regarding the respective roles and responsibilities of the various agencies and organizations referenced throughout the ordinance, the lack of any fiscal analysis, the selected definitions of various housing types, to name a few.

At the end of the day, converting our City's parks into encampments for people experiencing homelessness is a terrible idea. This ordinance will likely create many new problems that divert resources away from a compassionate and sustainable solution to the local homelessness issue. This proposal will certainly diminish the enjoyment of several City parks by our neighbors with little certainty that it will actually solve the problem this ordinance seeks to address.

We believe our city can and must develop a better approach. We respectfully encourage the Common Council to oppose Ordinance 21-06.

Sincerely,

Karen Howe Fernandez
John Fernandez