

Denver, CO: First 100 Days, Immediate Action Priorities

*from Action Plan for Rights, Dignity, and Housing.**

What Denver City Council can do in the first 100 days of the 2019-2023 term

I. Rights, Not Sights - Decriminalize Homelessness.

City Council should immediately decriminalize homelessness by repealing the survival ban [camping ban ordinance Denver Revised Municipal Code (DRMC) §38-86.2].

Poverty is not a crime, but Denver continues to enforce laws that make it a crime to be homeless - forced to sleep on the streets with no where else to go. Criminalizing the act of sleeping with cover is both inhumane and ineffective.

II. Services, Not Sweeps.

City Council should immediately request Denver Dept. of Public Works install trash cans and portable toilets near every homeless encampment. The trash cans should be emptied many days a week by an expanded Triangle Works program which employs people experiencing homelessness to do trash services on Denver city streets. The portable toilets should be emptied many days a week by the toilet service company.

Sweeping people from place to place around the city does not end homelessness nor does it help maintain a healthier and safer community. Communities living on the streets need trash and sanitation services. Trash, bathroom, and water are basic city infrastructure that everyone - regardless if they can afford a house - needs.

City Council should immediately move to support creation of a non-police crisis response team to replace police presence in encampment displacement sweeps and instances of crisis and conflict in Denver.

Denver should implement a model, similar to the CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) model in Eugene, OR, which utilizes a response team comprised of a mental health responder and a medic to answer calls through the 911 dispatch system to respond to non-threatening crisis. Funding should be redirected from current cost of sweeps to these non-police crisis response teams. Part of this team's job should be to support people living on the streets in place of sending police to regular street cleaning.

III. Housing, Not Warehousing.

City Council should immediately pass legislation to ensure churches, non-profit organizations, and property owners have clear automatic permission, without permit processes, to host tent communities with bathrooms for people without housing.

Any property owner should be able to use their space to support people who have nowhere to live. The city code currently allows for 8 people to live in churches with no permits needed. The city policy should similarly clarify permission for any land owners to host people on their outdoor property without requiring permits.

It is time to get going. There is work to be done...

* Full plan for Rights, Dignity, and Housing can be found at denverhomelessoutloud.org.

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