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PRESENTATION TO PLANNING COMMISSION

My name is Pam Cross and I live in Shoreline.

Homelessness has been a widely recognized problem since the shanty towns called Hoovervilles arose during the Great Depression.

The media loves to refer to the current homeless situation as “an epidemic”. It makes it sound like the measles. Measles is contagious. There is no pill to cure it. But there is a vaccine to prevent it.

Being homeless is not like having the measles. It is not contagious. And there is no vaccine to prevent it. But is there a cure?

It is naive to think that we can put a stop to homelessness with a single solution. But one thing we have learned is that people are more likely to get back on their feet once they have a warm and dry place to sleep, food to eat, a place to shower and, most of all, hope. Hope comes from the social services provided and the support of churches and other non-profits. Hope comes from the ability to work in concert with others in the same situation to make things better for everyone. Like United We Stand.

What we are doing here, now: this really has to stop:

1. stop conducting more studies,
2. stop repeating the mistakes of other cities,
3. stop trying to find a more creative solution,
4. and stop fighting among ourselves.

There is no time to try out an untested movement of encampments to neighborhood backyards. There are too many unknown risks for the homeowner/host, the neighborhood, and the homeless individuals.

It is time for us to work together and move ahead with what Mary's Place, Vision House, Hopelink, Quixote Village and others have proven works:

Until permanent housing is available, provide temporary mini-houses on a permanent site with communal kitchen, laundry and showers, and access to a full range of social services to assist in physical and mental health issues, finding a job, and finding a home.

Homelessness is a societal problem that needs a society to fix it: Committed citizens, city, county and state governments, and yes, the federal government as well. We cannot continue to leave this to the churches and non-profits. We need more than a "village." We need the whole country.

Thank you.

PAM CROSS