



August 30, 2021

Mayor Ted Wheeler and Portland City Commissioners  
Portland City Hall  
1221 SW 4th Ave  
Portland, OR 97204

Mayor Wheeler and Portland City Commissioners:

We are writing to request a more active and coordinated city response from the Office of Civic and Community Life and the Portland Police Bureau to the growing problem of criminal behavior in the hardest-hit residential areas of the Hosford-Abernethy neighborhood.

One epicenter is 27th and Clay Street, right behind Safeway and the Holman's Funeral Home. This is about a block from the fatal shooting on a TriMet bus in broad daylight a few weeks ago.

Over the past year, this high-pedestrian area has become the site of criminal activity and threatening behavior. For example, a large chop shop has set up camp behind the Safeway, with hundreds of bikes and bicycle parts under tarps. Those running the chop shop have been belligerent and threatening when approached. The sidewalk is intermittently blocked, and many neighbors have expressed concern that they no longer feel safe walking to the bus stop or the neighborhood store, and certainly not at night. About 10 children live within a block of the site. Yet the city response, so far, has been indifferent.

Other recent activity at this site includes:

- Large camp sites with multiple tents, tarps, piles of garbage, human waste and needles
- People having campfires in the public right of way, near fuel cans and dry landscaping
- Campers getting in regular altercations with each other and threatening residents
- Visible signs of drug use and rampant drug dealing
- People in mental health crisis waiting days on the street for assistance, spiraling into despair
- Significant burglaries, including the theft of three hearses from Holman's
- People in the street brandishing weapons, including knives.

Neighbors have worked closely with Safeway, Holman's, and HAND (please see attached Good Neighbor Agreement). They have been in regular contact with the Office of Community and Civic Life and the Portland Police Bureau. Several individuals, including Sarah Berkemeier (Crime Prevention Coordinator at the Office of Community & Civic Life) and Officer Matthew Jacobsen (PPB), have been responsive and supportive.

Yet all too often, the neighbors find themselves going in circles, bouncing between the Portland Police Bureau and the Office of Community and Civic Life, with each demurring and citing nebulous city policy for their inaction. This dynamic has a corrosive effect on people's faith in city government.

HAND shares city leaders' dismay with the problem of homelessness in Portland, and we agree about the need for a compassionate response for people in crisis. Having said that, we think the city must draw a bright line between homelessness and overtly criminal behavior. Providing aid and compassion for those without homes in no way precludes the city from acting against others who threaten violence and bully those around them.

We are asking for your help working together to restore the livability of our neighborhood. We ask that you respond to the neighborhood association with a specific plan to improve coordination between the police and the Office of Community and Civic Life.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Chris Eykamp  
Chair, Hosford-Abernethy Neighborhood District (HAND)

CC: Portland Police Chief Chuck Lovell  
Michael Montoya, Office of Community and Civic  
Sarah Berkemeier, Office of Community & Civic Life  
Officer Matthew Jacobsen, PPB  
Lucas Hillier, Homelessness and Urban Camping Impact Reduction Program  
Doug Stewart, Safeway  
Susan Lindsay, Buckman Neighborhood Association  
Debra Hochhalter, Richmond Neighborhood Association  
Mike Rogoway, Neighbor