

STREET ROOTS PHOTO

## Right 2 Dream Too too valuable to lose

**R**ight 2 Dream Too, the five-year-old rest stop that serves more than 100 people experiencing homelessness offers critical services in Portland's Old Town/Chinatown.

Some people don't want to admit it, but the camp has offered a calm in a never-ending

storm of mental health and homelessness. Prior to the camp in Old Town, hundreds of people filled doorways, isolated and alone throughout the neighborhood.

Without the camp, elected officials, the neighborhood and businesses are naive to think that the hundreds of people won't return to their doorsteps. Which of course, will set off a chain-reaction of powerful interest groups calling for the criminalization of people on the streets. It will also push advocates and others on the streets to set up shop in front of City Hall — demanding that R2DToo find a permanent location.

R2DToo's current lease is set to expire on April 7. That's not a lot of time to find a permanent location for the camp. The reality is being R2DToo disband without a plan would be a nightmare, both practically and politically.

It's true that R2DToo has been at the center of controversy for years. Obviously, developers and the neighborhood association believe that the current location on Fourth Avenue and Burnside is not reasonable. They've thought so for years. Now, the land owned by the Portland Development Commission, is needed to support development at the Grove Hotel.

The politics surrounding R2DToo are many. Everyone seems to point fingers in a different direction when it comes to the question of trying to find a permanent location for the camp. Everyone has a different opinion on what needs to happen.

Some believe the city has exhausted its options when it comes to finding land for the camp to be sited. I happen to believe that's ridiculous. If the city all worked together collectively to find a location for R2DToo, they could. They should.

R2DToo provides vulnerable individuals and couples experiencing homelessness a safe place to rest and sleep. The camp operates

outside of your traditional shelter network — offering people on the streets a welcome and safe environment.

More so, the camp works with local social service providers to help give individuals a safe place to call home. Since the R2DToo was created in 2011, they claim to have supported and stabilized more than 400 people while they waited to access housing.

In case you weren't aware, the average wait for housing for many people experiencing homelessness is months and sometimes years. Not even the most sophisticated nonprofits in the city are able to house people on the dime. It's a long, hard slog. No one has the answer.

Modern day homelessness is a conundrum. For nearly 40 years local governments have been carrying the water for what was historically a federal priority. Homelessness in Portland and throughout America isn't going away anytime soon.

After years of homeless advocates fighting with government official about the need to decriminalize people on the streets for their own existence and to allow tent cities to be a viable option — government officials throughout many urban environments began to reluctantly understand the complexity of the situation on the ground. They began to understand the tent cities do play a critical role in supporting the human rights of people without a safe place to call home.

The reality is that R2DToo plays a critical role in helping people access a community with love and trust. Without the camp, hundreds of people on the streets will be isolated and on their own. That's simply unacceptable.

Whatever the outcome is for R2DToo, it shouldn't end in disbanding the camp. The fate of R2DToo shouldn't get wrapped up in the current politics surrounding City Hall. It should be reflective of the camp itself — a community that comes together and works to create a better tomorrow for people experiencing homelessness.

Now is not the time for us to lose faith in local government. We are behind the many the officials working to create a safe place for people on the streets. We expect officials to do the same: to find a way to support both R2DToo and others working to give people a safe place to call home.

We must find a way.



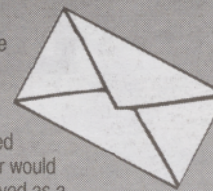
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By Israel Bayer

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