

No Where Left To Go

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The Hazelnut Grove camp has been active since at least May, and has developed into an organized community with a code of conduct. It's located on a small plot of public and private land at the base of a steep hill next to a non-profit garden that works with the Sisters of the Road Café, which serves houseless populations and serves low and no-cost meals to the public.

The city has brought in a trash bin and a portable toilet to keep the area more sanitary. But the tensions are still there. But with up to 50 people living on the site, and a waiting list of people who would like to join the community, it's clear there are more people who need a place to go, be it this camp or elsewhere.

Daniella Herman, chair of the Overlook neighborhood group, complains in an open letter to the Mayor and other city leaders that what was set up as a tempo-

rary camps have "no meaningful boundary or population limits, nor safety and enforcement support for the residents."

Herman also calls the living conditions inhumane, referencing the icy temperatures, severe rain and winds, and mud pooling at the base of the tents. But there's no offer of resources to help the houseless campers who say they would happily work with protective structures if they had access to any.

"How can they condemn us for being too poor and not having proper drainage, when they are warm in their houses and condos up above us?" asked one of the campers. "We would love to be less cold in more humane conditions if there was any way for us to access that on minimum wage."

He wished not be named because of fears he would have blowback if his employer found out he had lost his home.

Many of campers said they are



PHOTO BY OLIVIA OLIVIA/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Cooking at the Hazelnut Grove homeless camp along North Greely Avenue is one of a number of tasks residents are asked to provide. Other activities can include cleaning, helping out with supplies or looking out for the safety of others.

working, but struggling to make ends meet because they can't afford the current Portland rental market. Some of them spoke of going to bed early so they could get to work, and many of them walk the treacherous path down the side of the four lane highway to get to a bus or a MAX line so

they can go to work or school or meet their other social commitments.

The Hazelnut Grove campers have been told they would not be moved during the winter, which many campers are hoping will allow them time and resources to insulate some of their cobbled-to-

gether homes, which range from tents to make-shift "tiny homes" of lumber and other materials.

"If I want to focus on what I want this to be instead of what I'm afraid will happen, I'd say my dream is for everyone here to have a tiny home," Serrica says. "That way everyone who needed just a little place to go would have that, and we would have a garden to tend to next door and cook collectively together."

The second camp has created some tensions, since they don't appear to have a similar set of guidelines as Hazelnut Grove.

As for any of the homeless, a forced move would be devastating to them.

"There are more empty homes in this country than there are homeless people. If we wanted to house human beings, we could. But since we that's not our priority, we should at least be allowed to house ourselves," said one of the Hazelnut Grove campers, who asked to go by the name Jim Smith.

Another resident, Raymond Wade, who has been here since the camp's inception, has a tiny home he's built that is so far the strongest one in the community. Wade says he can build more, and has started on a storage unit for residents' belongings.

"I just think that it's a basic human right everyone should have, to be housed. I can't afford the outrageous cost of rent. I can make homes. I can make several homes," he says. "We deserve to have a roof over our heads. I wish I could offer that to everyone."

The camp has become so popular that there is now a waitlist of people who hope to be sheltered in the small, self-guided communal area.

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