

**From:** Lynelle Wilcox <lynelle@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 15, 2025 4:52 PM  
**To:** CityRecorder; Julie Hoy; Vanessa Nordyke; Paul Tigan; Linda Nishioka; Shane Matthews; Deanna Gwyn; Dr. Irvin M Brown; Mai Vang; Micki Varney; Gretchen Bennett  
**Subject:** Public comment for City Council work session 091525 agenda item 2

## Mayor Hoy and City Councilors

My name is Lynelle Wilcox. I live on Norway Street in Ward 1.

**Livability options:** I support the proposed livability options as listed in the staff report for tonight's work session:

- **Homeless Service Team Expansion** (two police officers & materials / services - \$418,700 annually)
- **Community Policing Officers** (eight police officers & materials / services- \$1,663,650 annually)
- **Salem Outreach and Livability Services Team Expansion** (two parks maintenance operators & materials / services - \$400,000 for 9 months)
- **Co-Response Model Pilot Program** (Fire Department costs of \$196,302 for six months for an EMT-Basic and a Paramedic)

As long as implementation of these options is based on values of trust and connection, as opposed to punitive styles, these options seem likely to benefit businesses as well as people experiencing homelessness. I appreciate that Police Chief Womack and Fire Chief Gerboth both convey strong values and deep commitment to building trust and relationships.

**Restrooms:** As we consider livability, I hope we also reconsider adding some restrooms. Restrooms have been discussed during previous task forces, and a prior task force recommended adding bathrooms, possibly one or more of the Portland Loo rest rooms. Whatever happened to trying that?

We all know that restrooms are necessary - not just for people experiencing homelessness, but also for people who want to visit, shop, enjoy our parks, etc.

There was a time that the city hired security with a focus on watching the rest rooms/porta potties. That approach reduced restroom issues, and associated repair and maintenance costs. The cost of security can be a worthwhile investment that enables more livability for businesses, the general public, and people experiencing homelessness.

**Restroom funding:** I realize that bond funds cannot be spent on homelessness specifically, but bond funds CAN be spent on parks. I hear that McNary Park might get a Portland Loo. What if multiple parks considered increasing restrooms, using some bond funds to accomplish that?

**Other livability options:** In addition to more restrooms, can we also consider adding drinking fountains, so

everyone, sheltered or not, has easy access to stay hydrated on hot days? Can we add more trash cans back? Can we consider cell phone charging stations? Can we add benches back, so homeless or not, people have more places to rest?

**Collateral damage:** As we removed benches so homeless people won't sleep on them, as we removed trash cans so homeless people won't sort through them, as we reduced public restrooms and reduced public restroom hours so homeless people wouldn't use them, we made things less and less livable for people experiencing homelessness. Those changes have ALSO made downtown less and less accessible for people who have grown to an age or developed a health issue or disability that leaves them now needing frequent restroom breaks, water to stay hydrated, and/or benches to stop and rest before they can walk another block.

Many of these individuals loved downtown, and shopped and dined there often when they were younger. Many of these individuals were active and engaged community members, volunteers, and

some even helped develop aspects of downtown and our city. Now many of these people and others are no longer able to hang out downtown to shop and dine and window shop because the very things we did to reduce the presence of equitable fellow human beings who are experiencing homelessness also excludes sheltered individuals who now need the very things we took away.

As we do things that will supposedly increase the safety, livability, and bustling-ness of downtown, it's crucial to also consider the collateral damage of our decisions. If we make things less livable for people experiencing homelessness, we are also reducing who ELSE can participate in downtown activities. Livability and safety for ALL reduces livability crimes and reduces the collateral damage that businesses are also experiencing, whether they realize it or not. Please consider that as you decide what safety and livability options to pursue.

**Inclusiveness**: Homeless or sheltered, everyone has the right to feel belonging, safety, and livability in our city. Money is tight, and yet park bond money

might be used creatively to increase belonging, safety, and livability for all.

The homeless crisis is hard and sad in all directions. It calls the question of whether our values apply to ALL people who live and work in Salem, or just sheltered people?

This topic is an opportunity to live up to our country's values and not down to our fears:

*"For we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."*

Thank you for your consideration.

Lynelle Wilcox