



## Community Questions from 9/16/20 DPR Meeting New Jersey and O St. NW

What action is being taken to make sure that no ADDITIONAL residents move into the park?  
There are no efforts underway to keep additional resident out of the park. We do not restrict people from public space. We will continue to monitor the park and conduct cleanups, as needed, to abate health and safety risks present. That said, should individuals move in, outreach teams from DBH, DHS, and DMHHS will attempt engagement to support these individuals and aid them, if they choose to engage, with access to the services they require to move towards housing, improved health and safety, or connections to the homeless services system.

What is the procedure for when encampment residents refuse housing/services AND refuse to leave?  
We cannot force anyone to receive services, housing or otherwise. We also do not remove them from public space. We can conduct cleanups (after posting signs 14 days in advance) and will continue to do so.

What happened to the cleanup around the end of August when there was human feces on the ground near the port a potty for a week?  
The waste around the porter-john was removed during the cleanup on 9/08. Port-a-potty servicing has increased to 3x a week.

What is the cost for each clean up?  
The cost for a cleanup would be the personnel from each of the six agencies that are onsite during the cleanup process. Each personnel makes a different salary and the staff that attend from each agency change (for example, MPD does not necessarily send the same officer each time nor does DBH).

The clean up process has been...lacking. Lots of garbage & human waste at bus stops.  
Trash and human garbage at bus stops does not necessarily all come from the encampment. Folks who aren't in encampments may also leave trash at a bus stop. If there is trash around a location that is not an encampment (like a bus stop) a 311 bulk trash request can be made to collect the trash.

Is there a date confirmed for the cleanup ? Sorry if I missed it  
We have not yet scheduled another engagement at this site. We completed a full cleanup last week and will discuss scheduling of future cleanups at our Friday case conference.

A clean up needs to be scheduled every 2 weeks for the rest of the year, at a minimum.  
NJ/O St. Park is one of our priorities areas and gets scheduled for cleanups regularly. We will continue to schedule cleanups over the next several months, as needed. Our team is responsible

for conducting cleanups at the 40+ encampment locations across the city and may not be able to conduct a cleanup every 2 weeks if there are other areas that present escalated health/safety risks. That said, we have increased distribution of trash-bags and are encouraging residents to cleanup after themselves. DPR and DGS come to pick up loose trash daily and the sharp containers are checked weekly.

How is it legal for the city to put sharps containers to facilitate illegal drug use and selling in a park that is clearly within a 1000 feet of a school?

The sharp containers are created specifically for biohazards and they cannot be opened by anyone other than a trained contractor with a specific tool. Sharps cannot be removed from the container once placed there. This is known to be a successful harm reduction strategy and reduces the number of sharps that are left on the ground for the community to come in contact with.

What do outreach workers do with those who are clearly mentally ill?

Outreach providers reach out to the Department of Behavioral Health's Crisis Response Team when there are concerns over a resident's mental health or wellness and they will respond accordingly. The Department of Behavioral Health engages this site, and sites throughout the District, on a regular basis and offers behavioral & mental health services.

It's all well and good to talk about offering people services but there isn't enough housing -if there are 3,937 people who are homeless and there will only be 214 housing vouchers next year how does that math work?

Despite historic investments over the past several years, supportive housing resources have always been unable to meet the demand for housing. Our resources have grown year over year to attempt to meet the demand, which has been exacerbated by a lack of federal investments. The pandemic has greatly impacted the District's financial resources, but both the Mayor and the Council added additional vouchers for FY21 despite cuts elsewhere. It remains crucial for all of us to continue to champion and advocate for more affordable housing in the District and region. It is also worth noting that not every person requires a permanent voucher to resolve an episode of homelessness: we prioritize permanent subsidies for those who need it the most and have other resources available, including short term rental assistance/services and one-time supports.

Some don't want housing/services. How many of those beds are empty?

Since the public health emergency began, we have been operating low-barrier shelters at reduced capacities to enable social distancing practices. We also added beds in previously-unused areas of shelters and opened hotel rooms to meet the need. On any given night, our shelters are nearly full - however individuals seeking shelter may access a bed by calling the Shelter Hotline (202-399-7093) if they are interested in doing so. We are also preparing to add additional shelter bed capacity starting in October as we prepare for the Winter months.

Is DPR ok with one of their property being used as an open air drug market? There is essentially zero presence from DPR. We witness drug deals on a daily basis and overdoses on a weekly basis.

MPD patrols the area frequently and is aware of concerns in the area. They understand there is drug use within the park. They work closely with outreach and agency partners around drug use as we know we cannot police our way out of this issue. If you see illegal activity or feel unsafe, you should call 911.

How have you been working with MPD?

Yes, MPD is aware of this location and patrols the area regularly. Any illegal activity should be reported to 911. All of our outreach teams work closely with MPD when criminal activity is witnessed or reported, as well as when there are emergency situations that require an MPD response.

Why "can't" DC arrest people for violating the no camping law? And why "can't" items illegally kept on public park land be impounded and confiscated as a deterrent to this illegal behavior? Is this DC Law? If so, it can change- why "can't" we change this?

Arresting people for experiencing homelessness will not solve the encampment problem. If someone were arrested, they would likely be released shortly thereafter. They still wouldn't have housing and their reasons for choosing to stay outside over shelter likely will not change. Encampments are a side effect of a larger system wide issue and one we cannot police our way out of. That said, the cleanup process does allow us to remove certain tents and items that are left within a cleanup zone after the posted date and time.

Didn't the mayor say this is illegal. why not the enforcement

We enforce the no camping law through the implementation of our Encampment Protocol. We have the ability to remove certain tents and other items left within the cleanup zone after the posted date and time.

There are 3,937 people who are homeless and there are only 214 housing vouchers available next year

Despite historic investments over the past several years, supportive housing resources have always been unable to meet the demand for housing. Our resources have grown year over year to attempt to meet the demand, which has been exacerbated by a lack of federal investments. The pandemic has greatly impacted the District's financial resources, but both the Mayor and the Council added additional vouchers for FY21 despite cuts elsewhere. It remains crucial for all of us to continue to champion and advocate for more affordable housing in the District and region. It is also worth noting that not every person requires a permanent voucher to resolve an episode of homelessness: we prioritize permanent subsidies for those who need it the most and have other resources available, including short term rental assistance/services and one-time supports.

Previously we were told by DPR that a fence could be put up in the short-term, when will the fence be put up?

Fencing will go up as a part of the park renovation process before construction commences. The District is not going to put up a fence that would preempt the project timeline. In addition, the District is doing its best to closely follow interim CDC guidance to avoid displacing individuals experiencing homelessness which further increases the risk of spreading COVID.

Is there a way that a portion of the funding can be spent to put up a fence in the short term in order to eliminate camping within the park?

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Why were there no short-term solutions mentioned to the "elephant" in the park? How can \$1.3 million be spent on a future park when the existing park cannot be used safely by the community?

We will continue to conduct cleanups, as needed, at the park. We've worked over the last several months to implement strategies to mitigate concerns and health issues on site, i.e. installing a sharps container, handing out trash bags, brooms, and dust pans, increasing serving of the port-a-pottie, increasing DPR/DGS' cleaning of trash to once a day, and increasing outreach's presence at this location. We will continue to work to find ways to mitigate issues, but encampments are a side effect of a larger systematic issue and no interim solution will solve them. The city has a strategic plan to address homelessness (Homeward DC) and will continue to tackle this issue on a system-wide level.

Do you expect that the community will be able to provide recommendations for what they would like when the as-is and issues associated with it are more pressing than a future state?

We remain ready to hear and discuss ideas that the community has to mitigate health and safety risks.

What is being done with MPD currently and how can we ensure that MPD is able to speak in future meetings to ensure safety within the park?

MPD and the DPR's Park Rangers continue to work together to monitor the New Jersey and O Street NW park. MPD Captain David Augustine was on the call and was introduced at the beginning of the meeting. At our next meeting, I will ask MPD to provide an update on the work they are doing to stop illegal activity and address resident safety concerns.

As there was 30 minutes left to the meeting and slides set aside for Q&A, why was Q&A taken off the table?

I am sorry that you felt we ended the meeting too soon. At the beginning of the meeting, we asked residents to provide their questions in the chat feature. Questions were then answered by our staff. We then mentioned during the call that we will provide an update to all the questions later this week via email and that the answers to those questions will be posted on the project website.