



JOINT OFFICE OF HOMELESS SERVICES

August 20, 2018

Tyler Roppe
Kenton Neighborhood Association
2209 N Schofield Street
Portland, OR 97217

Re: New deadline to relocate the Kenton Women's Village

Dear Tyler Roppe:

I'm writing with an update about the status of the Kenton Women's Village (KWW), which has been successfully sheltering and helping to house vulnerable women, with full support from the Kenton community and beyond, since last year.

As you know, the KWW was created with the understanding that its current location would be temporary. Prosper Portland, the property owner, had previously committed the location to Transition Projects, Inc. (TPI), which has been working to develop an innovative affordable housing development where the village now sits.

It was initially unclear how long KWW would be able to stay on the site, while Transition Projects worked to secure funding for its development. When KWW launched, we knew we'd have at least a year. But how long we'd have beyond that year was unknown.

That timeline has since become clear. Given the urgent need in our community for affordable housing, we were very excited to learn this month that Transition Projects has received the final piece of funding needed to move forward with the development.

With the housing development fully funded, TPI anticipates being able to close on the purchase of the property from Prosper Portland and break ground as soon as February 2019. That also means February 1, 2019, has become our deadline for relocating the KWW or finding alternative options for the women sheltering there.

Because of the KWW's success — in particular the high rate at which women have been able to use the stability of the Village to transition into permanent housing — our strong desire is to find KWW a new site in the Kenton neighborhood. That is also the preference of Catholic Charities and the women living in the KWW.

The model has worked well in Kenton; the outcomes have been tremendous, and there has been so much support from neighbors and community members.

The potential new site is a City of Portland property very near the current location, at North Argyle Way and Columbia Boulevard. The site is promising, although a good deal of testing and site design work must occur before we can say for certain that it's actually viable.

As we contemplate a move for KWW, we are evaluating what has worked well and what has not worked well at the current site.

August 20, 2018

Page 2

In that evaluation, we have heard clearly from Village residents, Catholic Charities and community volunteers that the model is working – the pilot has successfully demonstrated the role that this type of alternative shelter can play in our homeless services systems.

Women like Jewell Ramirez, who addressed your neighborhood association this summer, had sometimes been on our streets for years before coming to the Village and finding a path back to permanent housing.

At the same time, we have also heard clearly that we must upgrade the infrastructure in the Village including but not limited to the quality of the sleeping pods, the water supply, the electrical supply, and some of the common area structures.

These upgrades represent significant costs, as does the move itself. The move is also understandably destabilizing for the women of the Village. Therefore, as we look to relocate KWV, our plan is to make it a lasting part of our continuum of shelter options for women experiencing homelessness, and to have it on a site where it can stay as long as it's needed and as long as it continues to operate successfully.

With a long-term site, we can justify the kinds of infrastructure investments that are needed to improve the quality of life within the Village. A long-term site will also eliminate the expense and destabilizing effect of frequent moves.

The Kenton Neighborhood Association has been a key partner in the success of this program. Transitioning to a long-term program will in no way diminish our office's or Catholic Charities' commitment to remaining engaged with the KWV steering committee and honoring the commitments in the Good Neighbor Agreement.

In the event that the move to a new site, whether in Kenton or elsewhere, takes longer than the February 1, 2019, deadline, please know that we will make resources available to Catholic Charities to ensure that the women in the Village can move into permanent housing or have access to bridge housing until the move is completed. Catholic Charities has already begun these discussions with the women to hear and address any concerns they may have.

We greatly appreciate the support that Kenton neighbors have poured into the Kenton Women's Village over the past year and half, and I look forward to working with you through this transition period. We will keep you informed of the progress we're making on the potential new Kenton site, but please let me know what additional information would be helpful.

Sincerely,



Marc Jolin, Director
Joint Office of Homeless Services