



October 21, 2016

The Honorable Mike Rawlings
Members of the Dallas City Council

Via Email

Re: Clearance of Haskell Encampment

Dear Mayor Rawlings and Members of the City Council:

We write again concerning the City of Dallas's eviction of homeless residents, this time from the encampment located at I-30 and Haskell Avenue ("Haskell"), which will conclude on October 25, 2016. This marks the third major encampment clearance this year—the third time that the City has evicted homeless residents without investing in meaningful solutions to homelessness, including sufficient shelter beds, affordable housing, and permanent supportive housing.

As the City is well aware, many of these homeless residents have nowhere to go—in fact, many Haskell residents were evicted from other large encampments in Dallas earlier this year. Dallas's homeless residents continue to seek out shelter in encampments because there aren't enough accessible emergency shelter beds—either because they are numerically insufficient, or because eligibility, religious, and cost restrictions have made them unavailable. As Mayor Rawlings has [laid out clearly](#): "We have run out of shelter space. There's no question of that."

Encampments are a natural response to circumstances like these, and they help homeless residents achieve some measure of stability, security, and support when housing is unavailable. For that reason, encampment clearances—particularly repeated encampment clearances—are destabilizing and traumatizing, and they cannot be used as a solution to a homelessness crisis. At the same time, encampments pose real public safety and public health threats to the residents that call them home.

In short, neither the existence of encampments nor their clearance can be solutions to chronic homelessness. The closure of Haskell demonstrates the real and urgent need for the City's meaningful investment in access to housing—which we hope will take place soon after the Homelessness Commission's final report next month.

But in the meantime, Dallas's homeless residents continue to face a reality where their very presence is criminalized—for living in encampments with threats of Criminal Trespass prosecution; for seeking food and water in many areas of the city with threats of Panhandling prosecution; and for sleeping with threats of Sleeping in Public prosecution. As just one example: in the five and a half months during and following the clearances of the Tent City and Coombs encampments, the Dallas Police Department issued over 700 Class C misdemeanor citations for Sleeping in Public alone. This reality is unacceptable. It is inhumane for Dallas to continue to use the criminal law to force homelessness out-of-sight, and it is unconstitutional for Dallas to criminalize behavior to which homeless residents have no alternative.

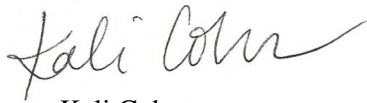
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The landscape is clear: Dallas lacks sufficient shelter beds, affordable housing, and permanent supportive housing to house its homeless residents. We call on Dallas to stop using the criminal law to evict people from where they are sleeping and, in the meantime, stop its enforcement of the Sleeping in Public ordinance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trisha Trigilio'.

Trisha Trigilio
Staff Attorney

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kali Cohn'.

Kali Cohn
Staff Attorney