

For Immediate release Mayor Larry Heikkila 11-17-23

The decay of Norman stops today.

For over a year I have tried to build bridges with members of our City Council who have differing viewpoints. I have compromised with our City Council. I have tried to reason with our Council members, yet, those efforts are continually undermined and manipulated. The end result is a Norman that many of us no longer recognize.

Our citizens and people who visit Norman no longer feel safe in many areas of Norman. Those areas are continuing to grow. An example of this is the deleterious effect on the Main Street downtown businesses.

Only days ago a homeless man walked into a Main Street restaurant and stabbed an employee. As a result people are refusing to go to these areas and patronize businesses we enjoy and want to support.

The current shelter location is not acceptable and contributes to the many problems we are facing every day. It cannot be near our schools, local businesses or residential areas. It must be moved.

We see panhandling and vagrancy throughout our city. People no longer want to go to our state of the art public library because of vagrants, the homeless, and a recent shooting. It doesn't feel safe or clean and the chairs smell of filth.

Businesses and churches have been forced to lock their doors during business hours because of vagrancy, violence and the threat of violence. Customers and visitors must knock to be allowed inside. Norman's main post office recently changed its lobby being open 24 hours, to now closing at 7:00pm.

These are just a few examples happening in Norman. It is a direct result of the Norman City Council's decision to invite the homeless to Norman and subsidize their lifestyle.

While treating their symptoms, we are not curing the problem. This is not a government responsibility but responsibility of charities and the private sector. The majority of council, supports spending millions of tax payer dollars on homeless rather than on infrastructure for the common good. We protect them from the elements and from the consequences of their lifestyle. Norman is a law abiding community. We will enforce our laws and ordinances regardless of anyone's housing status. Please help Norman Police by calling and reporting every incident and every time they soil on your property or location. Not reporting skews the statistics to indicate that there is no problem. (NPD non-emergency number is 405-321-1444)

We must stop the decay and decline of our city. I have guided council, to no avail, toward a more prosperous city. Businesses and citizens need to be taken seriously when voicing their concerns

Norman's citizens are compassionate as evidenced by the sheer number of our nonprofits. We, however, do not have to tolerate filth and lawlessness. This special population has been allowed to function throughout Norman without accountability. Things must, and will change immediately.