

Memo

To: Mayor Lisa Brown
From: Tyler Vermillion
cc: Spokane City Council
Date: 4/22/2024
Re: Our Dire Unhoused Situation

Dear Mayor Brown,

It is with a heavy heart that we reflect on the closure of the Trent Resource and Assistance Center (TRAC) and the ongoing crisis faced by our unhoused community members. As of March 31st, TRAC, once a beacon of hope with a capacity for 350 individuals, has shuttered its doors, leaving many without a roof over their heads. Last year, we witnessed the emergency shelter surpass its maximum occupancy, with over 375 individuals seeking refuge.

While TRAC was conceived as a solution to our city's homelessness crisis, it is evident that critical decisions and miscalculations have led us to this moment. The closure of a 350-bed facility without additional beds scheduled to become available underscores the urgency of our situation. The latest Point In Time Count reveals a growing unhoused population, with a corresponding rise in the death toll within this marginalized community, which is a part of our community.

From this experience, we have gained invaluable insights into our shortcomings, which must guide our future actions. It is clear that relying on only two agencies to provide wrap-around services was inadequate. Despite their commendable efforts, these agencies struggled to meet their contractual obligations, highlighting the need for a more diversified approach to service provision.

Additionally, the failure of the massive-shelter model at TRAC was a sobering lesson. While the intention was to centralize services and maximize support for individuals experiencing

homelessness, the reality fell short. TRAC's conditions were likened to a FEMA camp, revealing the immense challenge of providing dignified accommodations for hundreds of people in a centralized location lacking essential facilities and services.

Moreover, our experience with TRAC highlighted the importance of transparent and strategic contracting practices. Mismanaged funds and opaque partnerships underscore the need for greater accountability and public oversight in future initiatives.

Lastly, we learned the critical importance of coordination and collaboration in addressing homelessness. Without strategic coordination and a cohesive approach, our efforts are likely to falter.

Mayor Brown, we respectfully urge you to prioritize a comprehensive analysis of our past failures and collaborate with community organizations to develop a strategic action plan. This plan should prioritize the creation of safe, accessible, and dignified shelter options for our unhoused neighbors. Only through a concerted effort involving all stakeholders can we hope to address this pressing issue and restore dignity to those experiencing homelessness in our community.

Sincerely,

Tyler Vermillion