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Neighborhood Sheriff? Man decides who stays and who goes on Clinton Street

by Steve Dunn, KATU Staff

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Kenny Housman in an interview with KATU. Housman decides who stays and who goes in RVs along a strip of Southeast Clinton Street. (KATU)

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true.

When we visited Southeast Clinton Street a few weeks ago, we encountered homeless RVs and other vehicles lining the streets.

Neighbors questioned whether the city was doing enough to find them another place to park.

They told us about a neighbor who they felt had made things too comfortable for the homeless by encouraging them to stay and had taken matters into his own hands, deciding which homeless vehicles can park along Clinton and which ones can't.

Is there really a neighborhood sheriff, a ruling presence? Meet Kenny Housman.

"When they pull up with a piece of junk, I don't want you here. If you pull up with a decent trailer that you obviously own -- maybe even have put plates on it -- I want you here," said Housman.

Housman said he's owned the entire block of property that stretches the length of Clinton Street since 2019. It's the street where the homeless campers park their RVs and other vehicles. He decides who stays and who goes. He doesn't allow late night parties and no loud generators.

"If there's those kinda people, you have to take steps to get them out," said Housman.



Kenny Housman says he's owned the entire block of property that stretches the length of Clinton Street since 2019. (KATU)

And, despite neighborhood complaints, he attributes his screening process to keeping the neighbors safer.

"Thanks to my efforts -- catalytic converters, few of them are stolen, gas, few of it is stolen, because you don't want those kinda people that steal catalytic converters and gas, you don't want them on your street. If there are those kinda people, then you have to take steps to get them out. Semi illegally and semi legally -- it's kinda right in the middle there."

Housman, a Vietnam veteran, wouldn't tell me what steps he takes to remove campers he doesn't want. He says he also convinced some gang members with guns to leave.

So, what's his motivation for keeping the streets lined with campers? He says these days someone is going to park there, and the more you know about them, the better. He says the complaining neighbors have it all wrong.

"They just see a motorhome. They think, oh no, homeless, crime, drugs, etc. They don't see Tim, who I think works, I'm not sure, but he won't steal from them or anything else. They don't see, I don't know Jim very well; old man Steve, living on Social Security, needs a place to stay," said Housman.

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"You have to know who's here," Housman said.

Some neighbors have described criminal activity that they blame on their neighbors living on the streets.

When we checked police records for the neighborhood, here's what we found: Above average number of assaults, stolen cars and weapons violations, although none of that can be attributed directly to the homeless campers.

Still, much of the neighborhood ire is directed at Housman himself. During our interview, another neighbor pulled up, claiming that Housman provides electricity to the homeless campers. The two engaged in a screaming match in the street, with Housman flipping the man off.

"He doesn't know anything," said Housman. "You don't see any power cords going out there. None."



Kenny Housman and a neighbor driving by get into an argument during a KATU interview. The neighbor claimed Housman provides electricity to the homeless campers. Housman denies that. (KATU)

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contact city workers and attempt to enable people to stay on the block, though he does not have the authority to monitor the public street bordering his property.

"The city plans to make sure this area is slated for more regular check-ins in addition to the normal reporting process."

But don't expect Housman to stop managing the street, choosing his neighbors. After all, he insists it's the only way it'll work.

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"All of this -- you don't find any car thieves here, you don't find people laying around doing drugs, etc. You shouldn't find any needles, all of the trash is in one place for CCC to pick up. They gotta live someplace, but the good ones have to live someplace. The others? They can't live here."

Conversation (24)

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IMHUMBLEO

1d ago

Give the man some credit, at least he is trying to do some good and help people!

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