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Sent: 4/9/2021 3:47:26 PM
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Cc:
Subject: Statement regarding notification to homeless camps in parks

Hello everyone,
Debra asked me to share this statement with you. It will not be sent out as a press release but rather held in reserve for media inquiries, should we get any. I am on standby for any inquiries and APD knows to refer any inquiries they get about this matter to me.

Statement regarding notice given to encampments at City parks

On Friday, April 9th, the City of Asheville issued 7-day removal notices to unsheltered people residing in two encampments in our City parks. These include encampments at Aston Park and Martin Luther King Jr. Park. Due to the escalating safety issues around these encampments, it is anticipated that the City will resume giving 7-day notice to encampments per existing policy.

This action was taken following safety concerns expressed by nearby neighbors and issues City staff have observed, including criminal and aggressive behavior. Our parks are places where residents, including families with children, should be safe.

During this 7-day period, the City will work with Homeward Bound and other community partners for outreach to help people in these encampments relocate. Our goal is to give people in these encampments an opportunity to be sheltered safely and with respect.

While the City has been aligned with [CDC guidance](#), which advises that unsheltered populations be allowed to remain in place during the pandemic to help cut down on the transmission of COVID, this guidance also advises that encampments should be moved if there are safety concerns.

We recognize that this issue affects our entire community and want everyone to know that we care about how this is affecting our neighborhoods and downtown. While we are sympathetic to our homeless population, we cannot continue to allow people to camp in unsafe conditions.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, if needed:

During the pandemic, many other cities are experiencing an increase in the homeless population.

The City funds two homeless street outreach positions with Homeward Bound. These individuals work closely with our homeless community members to connect them with services, particularly with the ultimate goal of providing housing.

Since the early stages of the pandemic the City has provided additional services to assist homeless individuals. In May 2020, the City funded an emergency shelter at a local motel that continues to serve people experiencing homelessness who are at increased risk for COVID because of age and/or underlying chronic health conditions. At least 145 people have been provided shelter since the pandemic began. Of those served, 37 have found permanent housing through partner agencies, such as Homeward Bound of Western North Carolina.

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