From:	Joe Kipphut
To:	Grp. City Council and City Web Site
Cc:	John Engen
Subject:	City Parks taken over by transient camps
Date:	Thursday, October 14, 2021 3:55:10 PM

Dear Council Members,
Walking a few times a week in our beautiful riverside parks, I want you to know how appalled I am over the overnight camping happening in McCormick and Silver Parks.

This morning, in Silver Park, there were at least 3 tents set up under the smaller, eastern pavilion. One camper had two large dogs that were loose and were running all over the park, harassing my leashed dog and another dog walker on the trails. The larger, western pavilion, had it's usual assortment of campers, camping debris, occupying that building. In fact, while walking in Silver Park two or three times a week at 10 am, I always see campers and their equipment and trash, under the large pavilion. Now, there is a tent set up inside the park itself on some mulched areas between the planted trees on the eastern end of the park. I called this camp in over the weekend to the Police Dept. It was still there 5 days later.

In McCormick Park, within sight of Park Headquarters, are 3 tents that have been set up at least 5 days, located on the rivers edge, behind signs saying, "This area will be cleaned on October 13". Most all the signs are gone today, pulled out of the ground and tossed into the brush.

I have lived here for a long time, and I have never seen things so bad, and the managing agency, the City, so unable to address the problem. I have talked to the police several times, and I believe I was just wasting my time and theirs. In fact, everyone I talked to in city government, is unable to address this take over of our parks by transient campers. (I called Animal Control today, and they were going to address the loose dogs in Silver Park. Thank you.)

We have invested millions of dollars into facilities, art work, interpretive signs, and landscaping, only to have much of the area occupied for residential purposes, not recreational purposes. The vault toilets are nearly full, and impossible to keep clean. I don't think the city's plan is working for dealing with this situation. I also don't think it is fair to the Park's Dept. to expect them to clean up after a broken system that is leveraged against them, with all the resources the city has at its disposal. I have not mentioned the increase in graffiti, litter, profanity, alcohol consumption, disturbance of the peace. The plan you have in place is not working, as it moves at a glacial pace, giving plenty of time for new campers to see and do the same. I urge you, Members of the Council, and the Mayor to start over with a pro-active approach, instead of a re-active one.

Sincerely,
Joe Kipphut
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