



April 2, 2018

Dear Mayor Turner,

As you know Museum Park Neighborhood residents have been concerned about the encampment under US 59 for nearly two years. As a neighborhood organization, we have reached out to everyone, you included, who can resolve the health and safety issues we face from the Wheeler encampment. Smoke from fires fueled by unknown substances, human waste around the encampment and on nearby property, and storage of multiple propane tanks under the freeway make everyone in the area nervous. Thefts of bicycles, of packages left on front doors, of items from cars in smash and grabs, are just a few of the daily reminders that along with the homeless, criminal transients are camping nearby. These criminal transients are emboldened to verbally harass our neighbors, vandalize property, and use knives and firearms to attack others.

We understand and appreciate the complexity of this issue. The city has moved cautiously because everyone's rights must be protected. Being homeless does not imply being a criminal. But being homeless does imply being vulnerable, and it is that vulnerability which attracts a criminal element to the encampment.

We appreciate all that you, your staff, our city council members, HPD officers, and the various City of Houston departments have done to keep the area as healthy and safe as possible. But Saturday morning's shooting, caught on video and reported by witnesses, coming immediately after the huge clean up effort by the city tells us that more needs to be done.

The encampment continues to attract criminal transients, who prey on the most vulnerable of our citizens living under the freeway. Criminal activity creates a culture of fear. When and where will gunfire next break out? No one living in this city should be afraid to walk out the front door. A stray bullet at 7:00 a.m. last Saturday could easily have cut down an innocent person caught in the crossfire, whether that person is homeless, a resident standing in their front yard, a police officer, a fireman.

We applaud the City's recent clean up efforts in the Wheeler Encampment and the progress being made to begin enforcement of the ordinances passed in April, 2017. We implore the city to continue moving forward with its actions to enforce these reasonable ordinances and urge you to continue with the six point holistic plan that includes housing for the homeless, a plan that will provide for the safety and health of all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra L. Stevens".

Sandra L. Stevens, President
Museum Park Neighborhood Association

cc: CM Dwight Boykins
Marvalette Hunter