

I want to thank Jessie Burke and the Old Town Community Association for inviting me here today. More importantly, thank you Jessie for your dogged advocacy and commitment to bringing more safety and compassion to Old Town.

I want to acknowledge the progress we've made in Old Town, while also being clear-eyed on what work we still must do.

Homelessness, crime, gun violence, trash, graffiti, and economic hardships for local businesses have posed a real threat to the livelihood and survival of Old Town-- Portland's oldest neighborhood.

At its core, my administration is focused on constant vigilance and improvement of the way our city operates.

My team and I seek to have a pulse on the city and we're constantly looking to improve the City's operations and services to tackle Portland's biggest challenges.

When it comes to the Emergency Declarations, I'm repeatedly being asked "WHY ARE WE TAKING ACTION NOW?"

Our resources were limited until the pandemic restrictions were lifted earlier this spring. This allowed us to implement innovations at the scale and speed to more closely match the problems.

That is why a year ago my administration began a series of Problem Solvers meetings to engage with concerned members of the community.

Jessie Burke, who serves as the Chair for the Old Town Community Association, attended our first meeting to share the challenges she's faced while running a family-owned business located in the heart of the homelessness crisis in Old Town.

When we asked Jessie how our team could help, she asked: "How do we find the number of available shelter beds today?"

At this time, neither the City of Portland nor Multnomah County had a centralized database for identifying available shelter beds on a daily basis.

On March 2nd of this year, I started the Street Services Coordination Center in partnership with Multnomah County through an Emergency Declaration.

Prior to the activation of the Street Services Coordination center, unsheltered Portlanders were met with a mishmash of available resources. You were required to call shelters one-by-one to find available bed space for that night.

If you were lucky to come into contact with one of the few navigation team members working at that time—and we were able to find an available shelter bed--then you were given a bus ticket and asked to move your belongings on your own.

No wonder why so few vulnerable homeless Portlanders made it through this maze.

The Old Town neighborhood has been disproportionately affected by the crises impacting Portland today.

I know Portlanders want us to address these problems with compassion. Let me break down what a coordinated, compassionate response looks like:

Our efforts began to make contact with everyone who was going to be moved via the campsite removal posting process.

For the first time, we have one centralized system of all available shelter beds at any given time and one point of contact for those seeking that information.

Those who we made contact with were offered a shelter bed that was available immediately, transportation to get them to that available shelter space, along with moving or storing their belongings when available.

We have also developed an App that those in the field will use to track each interaction and the services offered and received. This information will be aggregated and shared online for the public to follow.

I believe in a client-centered approach to homelessness and my goal for the future is to have this newly developed app connect to the system used with the Joint Office of Homeless Services.

Along with our efforts to get better, more coordinated services out to where Portlanders experiencing homelessness are currently living, we have increased camp removals:

In the Old Town neighborhood since April, we removed 137 encampments, a 300% increase over last April; and in May, we removed 206 encampments for a 450% increase over last year.

Since April 11th, we were able to make 175 contacts through our Navigation Outreach Teams and 64 referrals to safe shelter in Old Town.

I recognize that sadly not everyone we make contact with will accept our offer of shelter—therefore causing a ripple effect where unsheltered Portlanders moved from Old Town have now settled in other parts of the city like the Pearl District, and the Downtown core.

These critical areas of the city also have the full attention of my administration. Right now we are continuing outreach efforts, offering available shelter space, and transportation to those living outside in dangerous and squalid conditions.

As I've said, through the Street Services Coordination Center partnership, we're constantly working to improve our services to Portlanders experiencing homelessness.

We're seeing early positive results of those efforts. Reports show that more people are accepting shelter referrals and moving off the streets.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Chair Deborah Kafoury and our Joint Office of Homeless Services team with the County for working with our community-based shelter organizations to reserve 92 shelter beds daily for those engaging with the Street Services Coordination Center.

What this shows is that **progress is possible** through planning, coordinated resources, and collaboration. We are making a real difference in Old Town and the city as whole.

I want to thank the Old Town Community Association for leading the efforts in this neighborhood. I also want to acknowledge the cultural institutions that have been impacted, such as the Japanese American Museum of Oregon, the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education, the Portland Chinatown Museum, and the Lan Su Chinese Garden who graciously opened their doors to host us today.

These institutions are integral to the City of Portland and have struggled to maintain business operations as a result of neighborhood decline.

I am proud of the progress we're making, and I look forward to bringing this action to all neighborhoods in Portland.