

NO on 300

We can do better!

No on Initiative 300 ~ Right to Survive Frequently Asked Questions

What is Initiative 300?

This is a citizen-initiated proposal to change the Denver Revised Municipal Code. If approved it would:

- Allow people to occupy all outdoor public places, including parks and sidewalks, indefinitely.
- Prohibit city agencies and law enforcement from enforcing essential laws that protect public safety.
- Eliminate all park curfews.
- Endanger public safety, quality of life and the economic vitality of our neighborhoods and our city.

It may also lead to unintended consequences that could include:

- Curtailing the ability of trained outreach workers from approaching and offering services to people experiencing homelessness. The measure makes it illegal to “harass” anyone exercising his or her rights under the ordinance without providing a clear definition of what constitutes harassing behavior. That ambiguity could have a chilling effect on programs designed to serve people experiencing homelessness.
- Harming our water quality if human waste, drug paraphernalia and trash from encampments near rivers contaminate our waterways.
- Increasing the risk of an outbreak of communicable diseases like typhus and hepatitis, which are common when large groups of people congregate in unsanitary environments.
- Significantly limiting or altogether preventing Denver Parks from holding permitted or ticketed events in public parks.

Who is behind it?

A small group called Denver Homeless Out Loud initiated this proposal. Although it qualified for the ballot in October, the measure has not been endorsed or publicly supported by any of Denver’s elected officials or leading civic groups.

Why is it being proposed?

Proponents are rightly concerned about the access to affordable housing in Denver and the well-being of our neighbors experiencing homelessness. The City of Denver and community partners are taking meaningful steps to create more affordable housing and provide effective outreach and support services to people experiencing homelessness (see more detail on page 2). More could and should be done to ensure Denver is a safe, supportive place for everyone – absolutely. But ***Initiative 300 is not a solution to Denver’s housing or homelessness challenges.*** Allowing people to ***sleep outside in public places is not safe, healthy or helpful for the people experiencing homelessness*** or our community. In fact, based on the way this proposal is written, Initiative 300 may make it harder to provide those experiencing homelessness with resources and services. ***Denver should be a place where all people can thrive, not just survive.***

When will Denver voters consider it?

On the May 2019 ballot.

What parts of Denver will be impacted?

If passed, this would apply to all of Denver’s public outdoor spaces. People could sleep, eat, camp and/or live in or around:

- ***Residential Areas:*** on sidewalks and in alleys around homes.
- ***Parks, Trails, Open Spaces & Rivers:*** including Denver’s major urban parks like Washington Park, City Park & Sloan’s Lake, our mountain parks including Red Rocks, and our smaller neighborhood parks. Dog parks, trails open space and river greenways, including Highline Canal, would also be included.

- **Neighborhood Business Districts:** the small commercial districts throughout Denver neighborhoods that are home to locally owned coffee shops, restaurants and retailers.
- **Cultural & Sports Facilities:** including the spaces outside and around the Children’s Museum, Zoo, Museum of Nature and Science, Art Museum, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Coors Field, Mile High Stadium and Pepsi Center.
- **Downtown:** our central business district, where thousands of Coloradans live, work and play, and a destination for visitors from around the country & the world.

How much will this cost the City of Denver?

Unknown. But based on experiences of other communities we expect Denver would need to spend money to:

- Increase police presence in public outdoor spaces where people are camping.
- Expand maintenance efforts of park infrastructure.
- Expand already under-funded maintenance efforts for city streets and neighborhood alleys.
- Ramp up the capacity of Public Works to deal with trash collection and maintenance of infrastructure including storm water drains.
- Increase staff time and spending on litigation arising from the implementation and enforcement of this untested and poorly-written law.

What is Denver doing today to support people experiencing homelessness and expand access to affordable housing?

The City of Denver invests nearly \$50 million every year in resources that provide direct and indirect services to those experiencing homelessness. The City has more than a dozen programs and initiatives to address both the causes and effects of homelessness. They include:

- **Supportive Housing** – Denver is currently providing 250 units of housing and intensive case management services for chronically homeless individuals, with plans and funding to expand to an additional 100 units this year.
- **Denver Street Outreach Collaborative** – The City funds 18 street outreach workers, along with 2 behavioral health navigators and 2 overnight search and rescue caseworkers, to connect those experiencing homelessness and direct them to resources. An average of 713 unique individuals per month are referred to services.
- **Dedicated Fund for Affordable Housing** – The fund is estimated to raise at least \$150 million over the next 10 years to create or preserve 6,000 affordable homes with 40 to 50 percent of housing resource investments targeted to those experiencing homelessness and those earning below 30 percent of Area Median Income (AMI).

In addition to City investments, there are many non-profit organizations that spend private and philanthropic money to support the homeless population in our community.

While this is all important and impactful work, we know that the need exceeds our current resources and investment. Rather than fighting this ill-conceived proposal, we should be working together to strengthen our commitment to and expand our investments in programs and services that are proven to work.

Are there other cities that have passed similar ordinances to allow people to sleep and eat in outdoor public spaces? If so, what has their experience been?

We don’t know of any cities that have pro-actively passed a policy like the one being proposed in Denver. However, through a series of rulings and legal settlements the City of Los Angeles has been unable to enforce laws that would allow for city officials to move homeless residents off of sidewalks and other public spaces. As a result, over the last 11 years, encampments have popped up in all parts of LA, including a massive settlement in a part of the city known as “Skid Row,” which is home to anywhere from 2,000 to 8,000 homeless people. Drug use, violence, prostitution and arson are common in the area. The human waste, discarded food and trash associated with the encampment has attracted rats and fleas and created a public health crisis, including a typhus outbreak that reached “epidemic” levels in parts of the county in the fall of 2018.

We Can Do Better. Vote No on 300
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