

Communication from Public

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Council File No: 23-0529

Comments for Public Posting: Vote NO on Traci Park's CF 23-0529 Targeting Vehicle Dwellers

The most objectionable thing about councilor Park's motion is that while it purports to be for the benefit of unhoused residents who are renting an RV for shelter, it actually harms them. Instead of leading to a motion that would actually make RV rentals safe and sanitary, the six-paragraph preamble is a brilliant example of doublespeak that only gradually reveals that the motion's primary focus is housed residents. The first paragraph introduces the fact that 22% of unhoused residents in Los Angeles live in RVs. The second paragraph introduces the idea of "van-lords," who "capitalize" on the "vulnerability" of the unhoused. These vanlords are then juxtaposed with the benevolent City, which has a plan to rehouse folks living in vehicles. The end of the paragraph implies that the motion to come will "strengthen" existing rules "to protect the health and safety of our residents." The third paragraph strongly implies that "our residents" refers to those living in RVs. It highlights RV dwellings in "disrepair," with their inhabitants facing "unsanitary and sometimes dangerous conditions" and lacking "access to adequate hygiene facilities." Those residents who do not own but rent are "paying hundreds of dollars each month for precarious and substandard conditions." At this point most readers would be sure, as I was, that Park was going to suggest we do something to bring those conditions up to standard. The first two sentences of paragraph four reinforce such a belief. It contrasts landlords with vanlords, saying that there is no current mechanism to force vanlords to address code violations. However, the final sentence of the paragraph shifts subtly to something quite different. It does not state that vans must be made healthy but instead claims that the "issue of van-lords" must be "resolved" if the City is to address and "ultimately phase out" RV homelessness. [my italics] The fifth paragraph makes clear that phasing out RVs, not the welfare of their inhabitants, is the true heart of Park's motion. This paragraph is all about the necessity to make renting or selling an RV "in the public right of way" illegal. And indeed this necessity will later form the first part of Park's motion. The final sentence suggests (irrationally, if one's focus is actually RV dwellers) that creating this new illegality will "protect life and safety." Whose life and safety? The RV dweller who now, at least, has a locked

door between themselves and predators? The resident who will be forced into a tent that offers little protection against a slashing knife or driving rain? Sanitation could be addressed by providing garbage pickup, porta potties, public showers, and deliveries of clean water until permanent housing is available. Safety issues can be addressed by mental health and drug related services, as well as by normal policing. If a landlord refuses to comply with basic health codes, penalize them by confiscating the RV and giving it to its inhabitants. Kicking RV-dwelling residents onto the street, which will be the result if Park's motion passes un-amended, does not "protect" them. No, the residents Councilor Park really cares about are the housed ones. She is, of course, entitled to choose the objects of her affection, but it is galling to see her motion wrapped in a rhetoric of care and concern for the unhoused. I note that the remedies I have suggested above would also help protect the life and safety of housed residents without banishing RVs from the city.