

Dear Councilor Jones:

Our Menaul Business Coalition wants to thank you for meeting with us to hear out our opposition to Safe Outdoor Spaces (SOS). We are very concerned that SOSs will not control, or properly house the homeless population as proposed, and are modeled upon a false pretext. This SOS ideology has been advanced by City leaders, some Councilors and the Mayor as a stop gap measure, but would be rapidly catastrophic to business districts, should SOSs be adopted as law City wide.

The draft plan for the Menaul Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) Study, that our coalition has supported and been involved with for the past two years, confirms that respondents to the Menaul MRA survey identified the **homeless impact to businesses as a top problem by 93% and crime at 97%**. The homeless issues identified by the Menaul MRA study are not unique, as 20 other MRAs identified within the City are also subject to the same systemic homeless scourge. The homeless impact has been so devastating to businesses, that the Menaul Blvd corridor within the MRA boundaries is identified as blighted, with shuttered buildings, business that have closed, with **no ability to attract new capital investment**. SOSs will not check the box to convince mom and pop businesses to dip into their savings, or mortgage their homes to keep their businesses afloat, when they are now on the brink of extinction due to homeless issues, crime, Covid and the forecasted recession for Q1 2023. The Manager of the Crowne Plaza Hotel testified they recently lost two major convention bookings as a direct result of incessant homeless harassment to their guests on their property, including assaults, and inferred **a SOS poses an untenable risk for their long term viability. It would be a travesty if the City were to lose the Crowne Plaza**, due to misdirected policy and under investigated consequences. It is folly, and not supported by evidence, to expect SOSs to facilitate City revitalization for healthy, thriving, business districts and neighborhood communities.

You heard Lindsey Gilbert, President and Head of Menaul School talk about their investigation into **Camp Hope in Las Cruces**; that is advertised as the pinnacle of success and one for which the City of Albuquerque idolizes, and for which the City SOS program replicates. Mr. Gilbert was initially a skeptic in opposing SOSs until he and the Menaul School board members conducted an independent investigation. **Through their findings taken from real data off of police reports**, it is unmistakable **Camp Hope is creating an unsafe environment for the Las Cruces citizens, and increasing violent crime**, which is completely contradictory to what our City leaders have testified for Camp Hope. The following is an excerpt of Menaul School's investigation sent by Mr. Gilbert to Councilor Benton:

“One of my board members was tasked with contacting Camp Hope. Neither the Director nor Deputy Director returned her eight separate calls, but she did get real data from the Las Cruces Police Department. The results are shocking and terribly disappointing and nothing like what Brad Day or Carol and Elizabeth reported to us. I don't think they were trying to deceive us, but nor does it appear that they did not do their homework.

Here is a summary from our research: Based on 256 911 phone calls over the last six months the police reported that Camp Hope is one of the top places where the police are called to address issues. Trespassing, assault, shots fired, stabbing and other violent crimes are happening at camp and around camp. Often it is people trying to get in who cause the problem which again demonstrates why this location is difficult for neighbors like Menaul School. The Las Cruces specialist reported that 25% of the 911 calls turn into actual charges being filed. The Las Cruces police also reported that businesses within half a mile to a mile away have had to beef up security.”

The City of Albuquerque must take a cue, and learn from others who have tried the SOS approach and found it to be ineffective, economically destructive, and life threatening. Tent camps have been attempted and repealed in municipalities nationwide including:

- Seattle clears tent encampment after admitting failure. Seattle Times 5/10/2022 • Portland, Seattle,

DC, LA clearing homeless camps for good. The Columbian 6/5/22 • [Denver sees massive increase in homeless despite “Safe Outdoor Spaces”](#). The Denver Post 6/6/22 • [SOS Denver: Pros And Cons Of Safe Outdoor Spaces - Glendale Cherry Creek Chronicle](#) • NYC residents furious over homeless tent encampment in Queens neighborhood. NY Post 2/5/22 • Toronto Wants to Demolish Tent Cities. ca 6/16/2020

- Houston – Clearing and closing encampments and enforcing loitering and trespassing laws. • San Diego – City focus on mental health and drug abuse programs and no sanctioned encampments.
- Honolulu, Salt Lake City, Seattle have reversed support of sanctioned tent encampments. NM Sun 6/3/22

There are currently more humane and effective solutions to sheltering the homeless, than shuttling battered women to comeingle with men in outdoor tent camps, in sub -freezing temps, with outdoor wash stations and porta-potties, when the City Housing 1st program provides comfortable, indoor brick & mortar accommodations. To your credit, the City funded \$59,498,915 million to Family & Community Services in fiscal year 2022 to help care for 1311 of the chronically homeless, as identified by the HUD Point in Time Survey, which is a considerable commitment. Not to mention the \$15 million to purchase the Gibson Medical Center for a shelter. We continually hear the mantra that we have to do something; but SOSs are not the proper solution for the homeless occupants, when [the City has made the investment to properly house, properly secure, feed, medically treat, council and care for the homeless in an environment that is nurturing and not in conflict with the viability of our fragile business communities and neighborhoods.](#)

Businesses are as empathetic to the homeless plight as SOS supporters, [but forcing an untested SOS program modeled after a failed Camp Hope in Las Cruces and failing SOS's in Denver, will guarantee catastrophic consequences in Albuquerque.](#) SOS advocates are subjectively and emotionally catalyzing their positions, without the support of data and empirical evidence, that otherwise [proves SOSs are ineffective and harmful to communities.](#) SOSs are an attempt to manage, integrate, and socialize the homeless population, into legacy communities, which makes no common sense, and is in direct conflict with the IDO that provides for property rights protections. The sympathy for homeless populations is bantered around as if there are no other solutions, other than trying the Mayor's "all the above approach", when [SOS is just a Grand Experiment that has no foundation for success.](#) We would like to know where the sympathy will be for the business communities and neighborhoods that are on the receiving end of this Grand Experiment, should it become law and when it goes South.

We plead with you to do the research, that we believe you will find supports that SOSs actually increase crime, are harmful to the economy, and in direct conflict with City revitalization and flourishing neighborhoods. Please oppose SOS legislation and [vote to pass Councilor Bassan's ordinance O-22-33](#), to remove all references to Safe Outdoor Spaces from the City's Integrated Development Ordinance. Additionally, we ask that you [oppose the City effort to install a waste transfer station at Menaul and I-25.](#)

We are grateful for your common sense approach to governance, and long standing service to the citizenry of our great City of Albuquerque, and wish you the best of luck after your retirement from City Council.

Truly;

Menaul Business Coalition – Bob Reule, Participant