

East Oakland Homeless Camp Raises Safety Concerns

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A growing homeless encampment on MacArthur Boulevard near 106th Avenue in East Oakland has prompted increasing concerns among residents over health and safety risks, as the situation begins to affect local streets and traffic.

Staci, a nearby resident who frequents a local bar, described worsening conditions in recent years. “The smell is horrific,” she said. “There are rats and rodents, and they’re crossing into

the street.”

Residents have reported difficulties navigating sidewalks blocked by trash and debris, forcing pedestrians into traffic lanes. “Cars and buses have to swerve to avoid the mess,” Staci added. “It’s been close calls.”

The encampment’s expansion into the roadway has heightened fears about accidents and sanitation problems in the area.

Those living in the encampment acknowledge the challenges faced by neighbours. Teela Hardy, who has lived in her RV there for several years, expressed frustration. She said she has tried to secure housing but has been unable to because she cannot bring her dogs, which provide companionship and protection.

Hardy described efforts to maintain cleanliness within the camp but acknowledged difficulties with waste disposal. “The garbage collectors say they will pick up the trash weekly, but it rarely happens,” she said. “Some people resort to leaving trash on the street, which I hate.”

Ken Houston, the newly elected city councilmember for District 7, has pledged to take decisive action. “What has been happening on our streets for the last five or six years is unacceptable,” Houston stated. “Our children and seniors must walk in the street, dodging trash and encampments blocking sidewalks. Enough is enough.”

Houston plans to introduce an Encampment Abatement Plan at a council committee meeting scheduled for September 10. Ahead of this, he intends to begin cleanup efforts along MacArthur Boulevard in collaboration with public works next week. He also announced that RVs will be tagged as part of enforcement measures.

Funding for some of these initiatives will come from Measure W, a voter-approved Alameda County program aimed at addressing homelessness.

For residents like Staci, these actions cannot come soon enough. “We, the taxpayers, should not have to see this,” she said. “Something needs to be done.”

The city’s efforts to balance support for unhoused individuals with the safety and well-being of surrounding communities continue to evolve amid ongoing challenges.