

Ella Durchin
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Community Members of Eugene Address the Homeless Crisis

EUGENE, Ore. – City club members and the Chamber of Commerce met to discuss the homeless problem and its effects on local businesses. Eugene is ranked No.7 in the world for largest unhoused community.

President and CEO of the Eugene Chamber of Commerce, Brittany Quick-Warner spoke on behalf of local businesses. She conducted 175 interviews herself and found that implementing a collective change will be most beneficial to solving the crisis.

“We have a lot of businesses in our community experiencing a really significant increase in both crime and their ability to operate their businesses,” said Quick-Warner.

In August of 2021, 3115 individuals were noted as homeless in Lane County. Only 42 of those were moved into provided housing.

Heather Sielicki, the co-lead for Everyone Village, suggested that there is a large problem at stake and every detail needs to be closely examined in order to prevent it.

“If you don’t prevent the crisis then it becomes chronic,” said Sielicki.

Eugene City Councilor Randy Groves worked as a firefighter for 10 years before joining the council. He mentions what he has seen in office and that a change needs to come.

“We had areas of duplication and areas being missed, everyone was trying to solve the problem but we seem to be lacking a centralized coordinated process,” said Randy Groves, the Eugene City Councilor.

The committee extended their discussion to answer questions from concerned community members. Lane Counties representative of homeshare Oregon, Judy Smith asked about prevention.

“What is being done in our area to prevent people from becoming unhouses?” said Smith.

Each member of the committee responded with their input and future steps. The general consensus being that in order for a change to come, everyone has to work together and use the resources provided for good.

The chamber created five different plans to help the problem and it will be executed in November of 2021. The plans include a focus force to make sure changes are implemented and performing a cost study to analyze the effects the crisis has on businesses in Eugene.