



November 1, 2021

Dear Mayor Wheeler:

Thanks to you and to your team for taking the time to meet with us on October 18 to discuss the deteriorating conditions in Old Town.

We trust the meeting underscored that Old Town is in the grips of violence and chaos that affects all Portlanders in the neighborhood, whether visitors or residents, housed or unhoused. With all due respect, Old Town faces much more than the “branding” issues your team identified.

We appreciate your discussion of increased city funding for public safety, mental health services and trash removal. We look forward to learning more about the proposals announced this week as part of the fall BMP.

However, we were dismayed that many of the actions discussed during our October 18 meeting will take several months, if not years, to implement.

Mayor Wheeler, it’s been nearly 20 months since you acknowledged to Willamette Week that Portland and Portlanders are suffering major problems due to the availability of a cheap and potent methamphetamine. Old Town and our neighbors bear witness to the myriad effects of this epidemic daily, including flagrant drug-dealing and violent psychosis. We – along with many of our houseless neighbors – live in constant fear that it’s only a matter of time before the lethal combination of drug abuse, mental health breakdowns and widespread gun ownership result in a catastrophic situation.

Old Town desperately needs your leadership. We need action now and strongly urge you to develop 30-, 60- and 90-day plans so that we know that more immediate solutions are being considered and implemented.

It’s heartbreaking to think that the city and its leaders would turn their backs on



Portland's oldest neighborhood, home to immigrants who overcame decades of discrimination and indignity and today home to many who are fighting hard just to survive.

Please don't give up on Old Town.

Sincerely and in service,

Lynn Fuchigami Parks, Executive Director of Japanese American Museum of Oregon; Elizabeth Nye, Executive Director of Lan Su Chinese Garden; Judy Margles, Director of Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education; Anna Truxes, Interim Executive Director of Portland Chinatown Museum

Connie Masuoka, Board President of Japanese American Museum of Oregon; Raymond Cheng, Board President of Lan Su Chinese Garden; Jeff Mazer, Board President of Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education; Harris Matarazzo, Board President of Portland Chinatown Museum

CC:

Therese Bottomly, The Oregonian  
 Helen Jung, The Oregonian  
 Nigel Jaquiss, Willamette Week  
 Pat Dooris, KGW  
 Dan Haggerty, KGW  
 Maggie Vespa, KGW

Jeff Gianola, KOIN  
 Elizabeth Dinh, KOIN  
 Wayne Garcia, KPTV  
 Pete Ferryman, KPTV  
 Steve Dunn, KATU  
 Lincoln Graves, KATU  
 Kirk Johnson, New York Times