

OPINION: “New Bedford is not Newport! Gentrification will increase cost of intervention for homeless”

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This opinion is a response to the City of New Bedford requiring lodging house licenses and upgrades to the sober houses throughout the city.

“New Bedford has been essentially a working class city for most of history. Save for whaling captains and factory owners the majority of residents have been hard working residents eking out a basic standard of living. That there are elected officials and monied interests that have aspirations to create an upperclass destination with high end residential properties is having a devastating impact on the working class that can’t afford the rents or an income to purchase a private home.

Not all the homeless souls wandering about or panhandling on roadways are in the situation by choice. Drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness, war induced trauma, and workers who are paid insufficiently to find permanent residence, constitute the majority of the homeless.

Homelessness is the major obstacle to combating addiction,

mental illness and worker unreliability. Without permanent residence it is almost impossible to access the programs, medical services, and feeding venues that do exist in the community. And these services provide only immediate and emergency stopgap solutions.

For sustained stability having a permanent residence is essential.

From a purely practical perspective the investment in low or no- income housing would ultimately reduce the tax burden that subsidizes the emergency services that are mounting and are ultimately ineffective.

Gentrifying New Bedford may increase the tax base but it will also increase the high cost of medical and judicial interventions for those dispossessed and homeless. From a humane and financial perspective the Mayor and City Councilors must first concentrate on this issue before creating a Newport on the Acushnet River.”-Betty Ussach, Dartmouth.