

The Western Trails neighborhood has seen a marked increase in the homeless population in the past several years. As a result, the number of panhandlers has also increased proportionally. When you enter or leave our neighborhood through the major intersections of Pack Saddle Pass and Ben White or Manchacha and Ben White, you can almost always see panhandlers in these locations and even camping out nearby.

Because the homeless and other pan handlers can solicit and receive money at these intersections, they are a constant presence in the neighborhood. Besides the increase in trash, there have been many instances of neighbors witnessing some of these people relieving themselves, drinking in public, etc., even in the city park located next to Joslin Elementary School.

I know that some neighbors do not feel safe walking to local businesses because they fear that they will be approached by the homeless or that they or their children will witness offensive or threatening behavior.

I have been aware of programs such as “Keep the Change” and have always believed that as long as it is profitable for the homeless to solicit money at intersections, they will continue to do so. I also know that it is not helpful but actually harmful to give cash to the homeless. I am also proud that Austin is a compassionate, caring community that wants to help the less fortunate, but we need to provide the education and mechanism to do so in a way that is best for all of us. This is why I am extremely encouraged to see CM Kitchen’s proposed resolution to provide this much-needed mechanism to educate our residents on how to give in a way that will really benefit those of us who are less fortunate.

The Western Trails Neighborhood Association board supports the proposed resolution proposed by CM Ann Kitchen.

Leann Land  
Western Trails Neighborhood Association  
President