

911 will no longer respond to homeless camp calls in Albuquerque



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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. —

In May, Target 7 brought you the story of a woman who was featured on Extreme Home Makeover 14 years ago.

Her family used to house homeless people on their property but those they were housing started taking advantage of them, so they stopped.

Now, a homeless camp keeps popping up across the street and she says nothing's being done.

“They wait it out and then they just move back in. So all of that for nothing,” said Leisa Reece, who lives in the Trumbull neighborhood.

Recently, a homeless woman broke into her home.

“This woman went into the house and stayed in a couple of our beds,” Reece said.

It's unclear where the woman lives, but Reece said the last time she called 911 about the camp across from her home, she was told the police will not remove it and to call 311 instead.

“I thought, OK, so nobody has the authority to ask someone to move off of private property anymore,” Reece said.

Target 7 reached out to APD about their policy with homeless camps in a statement they said:

"The reason people are asked to call 311 is because solid waste is primarily responsible for cleaning up encampments. FCS along with ACS also assist with outreach and resources. If there is illegal activity officers will cite or arrest depending on what criminal offense is established."

But Mayor Tim Keller had this to say on Saturday during his state of the state address.

"We will not round up people; we will not force people onto a bus. we will not arrest people who have not committed an arrest able crime; we will not pull your officers off your 911 calls for somebody passed out under a tree," Keller said.

Under New Mexico state law camping on private property can be an arrest able offense.

"It becomes a crime, a misdemeanor of trespass, criminal trespass when someone is on property that they know does not belong to them and they do not have permission to be there," said KOAT legal expert John Day.

City Councilor Louie Sanchez said until arrests are made for trespassing nothing will change.

"We have a city and a police department and an administration who does not want to make any type of arrests for any of the lower-level misdemeanor cases. We must make arrests at the lowest level so that we can find the individuals who need the help and need the support from all the services that we have," Sanchez said.

Recently the city council voted to pass designated homeless camps around town just last week councilor Brook Bassan who sponsored the legislation asked for it to be repealed.

"I was under the impression that that would mean that we were going to begin enforcing the existing laws in Albuquerque. And it's come to my attention through other press conferences and media releases that have made me feel that I don't think that it's necessarily the intention of the administration to start enforcing those laws when it comes to overnight camping, trespassing and loitering," Bassan said.

Homeless people Target 7 has spoken to don't want to be placed in designated areas.

“I don't like to go by bar rules or anything like that too much, you know,” said Raymond Pineda.

Pineda lives across the street from Reece's home. He's been homeless for five years, he said if he had a creative space to live, he would stop camping on different properties.

“I have a creative mind, you know. It'd be great,” Pineda said.

Reece agrees.

“When I see it in my mind, I visualize something like. Like there is a lot of stuff over there at the railyards where they could set up a welder and a and a studio that that would collaborate and make something beautiful instead of just here, go live in a tent type of thing,” Reece said.

About five years ago, APD developed a policy to not jail people on lower-level offenses after they settled a decades-old lawsuit from a man who died in jail.

Under that agreement, they are supposed to cite people for non-violent misdemeanors instead.

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