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To the Editor of the Chattanooga Times Free Press:

Recent events in Chattanooga regarding the homeless population make me wonder if their needs will ever be addressed in the long term. Destroying the “tent city” they had created without consulting them or the agencies who serve them was wrong on many fronts. First of all, they were in a semi-safe environment where they had developed a sense of community. Finding them temporary housing scattered around Chattanooga destroyed the delicate community they had developed. Secondly, not all the people at this location were helped by this removal either in the short term or for the long term. Removing this one location did not help those that lost their homes but I am sure that it made the more fortunate people in Chattanooga sleep better at night knowing that action was taken against the “blighted area” of their fair city.

In Chattanooga, community leaders and elected officials came up with a ten year plan to end homelessness. It looks fantastic on paper. But realistically, what is being done to implement the plan? With NIMBYISM (Not in My Back Yard) rampant in Chattanooga, will we ever be able to create a one stop service area that meets the needs of this population?

I think it is possible, but it is not a job for one agency, one church, or the local government. It will take people from all walks of life to come together and have an open conversation about the issue. Removing the homeless from sight does not absolve us from being responsible for their plight. In today’s economy, we are all just one paycheck away from joining their ranks. How would you want to be treated if you were in their shoes?

It is time for Chattanooga to stop talking and start helping our fellow men, women, and children to find a better solution to homelessness. Go to the website and review the plan. Then start asking our elected officials to act on that plan and join in by supporting the programs that service this population. Together we can make a difference.

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