

To London City Councillors.

About: London HUBS plan.

As a City of London resident for over twenty years, I am writing to you in strong support of the whole-of-community approach our city is pioneering to address the housing crisis that has left so many of our neighbours inadequately housed or entirely homeless. As you know, communities throughout North America are struggling with multiple crises that, in a society where wealth is unequally distributed, have made life increasingly hard for our most vulnerable neighbours. These include the flooding of our communities with synthetic opioids, and the critical shortage of affordable housing.

I have been enormously proud of this city's planned response to these interlinked crises. With public funding and with generous support from private donors, we have planned a whole-of-community response to the challenges our community confronts in making sure that every Londoner has access to safe housing and to the supports they need to thrive in it. The hubs program recognizes that the housing crisis affects every part of our city, and needs to be addressed in location across the city. It recognizes that loss of housing is something that could happen to any one of us, no matter here in the city we are, and that every person who is unhoused is an individual who needs their own particular kinds of support to help them get back on their feet.

Recently, though, I have been disheartened by the opposition to the plan I have seen on social media, and have heard from some politicians. Whenever London tries something innovative, there are some members of the community who ask why we need to change, and complain about the cost. The cost in this case is modest, and the seriousness of the crisis is undisputed. But there are some who appear to feel that the aim of a policy to address the housing crisis should not be to help Londoners without housing so much as to make sure that their more privileged fellow-citizens don't ever have to meet or see them. This attitude leads to calls for carceral solutions—at the extreme, to jail folks without housing, or force them into rehab. Or at to confine them to downtown. These supposed solutions pit different parts of the city against each other. They pit those of us with privilege against other members of the community who need our help. They are divisive, where the problems we face call on us to work together and support each other. And, as evidence that you all know better than I do shows, these ways of approaching the crisis simply won't work. They might sweep the problem under the rug for awhile or make it possible for some to ignore it—but so-called solutions like this don't actually help our fellow-citizens in need.

The hubs plan to support Londoners without housing is an innovative and ambitious plan. I know you are hearing from opponents—some of them are afraid, some are misinformed—and some are practicing a politics of division for cynical reasons. Please know that there are many of your voters who support this plan, and who want London to show the rest of the country how by working together we can make life better for everyone in our city. I hope you will affirm the plan, and approve all three of the first hubs, at your meeting on Oct. 5.

Thank you for reading,

Matthew Rowlinson  
Base Line Rd E, Ward 11.