

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rochester Grants Pass Resistance Condemns Rochester's New Peace Village Plan

Opioid settlement funds should save lives, not fund surveillance and containment

ROCHESTER, NY — September 9, 2026 — Rochester Grants Pass Resistance is demanding that the City of Rochester reconsider its new Peace Village model, which has abandoned the low-barrier principles the community was originally designed to provide.

What was supposed to offer unhoused people safety and autonomy is now a **gated, highly regulated facility with 24/7 security, armed guards, no visitors, no walk-ins, restrictions on movement, and zero-tolerance policies.**

That is not low-barrier housing. It is containment.

We are especially concerned that the City is using **more than \$1 million in opioid settlement funds** toward this project. Those funds are intended to address the opioid crisis through measures including prevention, treatment, recovery, harm reduction, and services for people affected by opioid use.

Instead, Rochester is putting opioid dollars toward a program that **prohibits active drug use and relies heavily on security and policing.**

This follows a troubling pattern. The City has previously used opioid settlement funds for **library security**, raising serious questions about whether Rochester is treating these dollars as a general public-safety fund rather than using them for their intended purpose: addressing the opioid crisis.

Opioid settlement money should be keeping people alive, not funding armed security.

We are equally concerned that the City has turned to law enforcement to help define “safety” at Peace Village, including the Rochester Police Department's Homeless Outreach Team and a housing consultant whose background includes 21 years as a Rochester police officer.

Where are the people with lived experience of chronic homelessness?

The people this program is supposedly designed for should have meaningful power over its rules, security, access, and structure. Instead, the City appears to be designing a highly controlled environment and expecting the people failed by the shelter system to accept it.

If someone would rather sleep outside during a Rochester winter than enter a traditional shelter because of system barriers, **why would they choose a gated facility with armed guards, no guests, and even more rules?**

Rochester Grants Pass Resistance demands:

- **Put people with lived experience of homelessness in decision-making roles.**
- **Stop using opioid settlement funds for Peace Village security and other expenses unrelated to opioid abatement.**
- **Release a complete public accounting of the City's opioid settlement spending, including Peace Village and library security.**
- **Release Peace Village's full safety plan, rules, security policies, and occupancy agreements.**
- **Remove unnecessary barriers, including the visitor ban and excessive restrictions on residents' movement.**
- **Guarantee meaningful rights and protections for residents.**
- **Redirect opioid settlement dollars toward harm reduction, overdose prevention, treatment, recovery, and low-barrier housing.**

Peace Village was supposed to give people safety **without taking away their autonomy.**

Rochester should not spend millions building another system to control people experiencing homelessness.

Give people housing. Give them rights. Give them autonomy. And use opioid settlement money to save lives.

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