

# Closing PIP is not a solution

By Colleen Hilferty

I am saddened and outraged by the recent solution-empty and shortsighted petition circulated by opponents of the People in Peril Shelter, and am even more disappointed by the city for entertaining this petition and for again scapegoating the PIP, in the absence of a real citywide plan to address the needs of the homeless of Worcester.

As pressure mounts to close the PIP, I am reminded of last summer, when the PIP temporarily was forced to close during the daytime due to budget cuts. One afternoon shortly thereafter, I came across two men passed out on city sidewalks, one on Park Avenue, one on Piedmont Street.

To close the PIP as the winter approaches would only multiply this scene and equate to a genocide of the poor and homeless of Worcester.

The homeless will not simply disappear if the PIP closes. This population is too vulnerable to go far.

The mentally ill and chemically addicted homeless of Worcester County will die, on Castle Street, on Main Street, on Park Avenue and on Pleasant Street if the PIP closes.

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## As I See It

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ties throughout the inner-city will become winter refuge for the poor and displaced of Worcester.

The PIP has not created homelessness, drug addiction, mental illness and poverty in Worcester. The PIP simply serves as a refuge for all people suffering from the effects of these human conditions in Worcester County.

According to Buddy Brousseau, Executive Director of the PIP and member of the Worcester Homeless Action Committee, 95 percent of PIP guests come from Worcester and nearby surrounding towns.

There is a grain of truth to the fact that the drug-addicted PIP guests invite some of the illegal activity to the PIP neighborhood. However, the majority of PIP guests are the faceless homeless of Worcester, chronically mentally ill men and women, the working poor homeless, individuals with end-stage AIDS.

The city of Worcester does not have adequate shelter resources for its different populations in need, and the PIP shoulders the responsibility of caring for Worcester's most desperate citizens.

The city instead should be working with the PIP and others to look at ways to increase services for poor and homeless populations.

A city the size of Worcester needs a sober, emergency shelter for men, women and children. Also, the city needs smaller, targeted, scattered-site programs to better address the different needs of Worcester's homeless.

The homeless are citizens of Worcester. They need to be represented by somebody and not maligned and ignored at the city level. Stronger services would create a stronger neighborhood in Main South.

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