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#267163 | March 10, 2021

Testimony to **Portland City Council** on the **Shelter to Housing Continuum Project, Recommended Draft**

"I plead that you do not allow camps to damage our natural spaces further and enable everyone to enjoy our parks and open spaces. We need clean air and parks more than ever, and not having access to natural areas would significantly limit the quality of life for Portland citizens." Though I strongly agree that we must do something about the rampant homelessness in our city, a hasty plan will only be of disservice to Portland's citizens and will have dire consequences for years to come. Homelessness is a complicated human dilemma that requires extensive research and examination, with a goal for long-term success. Portland is well-known for its lush greenery and natural spaces, and it's one of the main reasons I moved here. Thus, I'm extremely concerned about the proposal in the S2HC to allow camps in open outdoor spaces. Not only will this be toxic to our natural areas, but it will severely limit access for the citizens of Portland. If you recall, much of the Laurelhurst Park annex was inaccessible to park-goers this summer. The 100+ tent/vehicle camp that lined Oak St. and 37th St. became a health and safety hazard for our community in many ways: - Campers urinated and defecated on the sidewalk, playground, and park. - Campers disposed of used needles and syringes on the street and in park grounds. A recent article in Street Roots mentioned one of the campers to be HIV positive.

(<https://www.streetroots.org/news/2020/12/02/after-painful-sweep-laurelhurst-park-unhoused-residents-want-space-exist>)

- Reports of crime in surrounding neighborhoods increased, including threatening harm to passersby, theft of personal belongings, and break-ins into homes and cars. - There was a shigellosis outbreak in that camp. - There was a COVID-19 outbreak in that camp. - There was an increase in the rodent population. - Campers were dismantling electric boxes in the park, putting others in danger of electrocution. - Campers were lighting massive fires on the sidewalk and the park, sometimes under 100-year-old trees within Laurelhurst park. These are but a handful of incidents we experienced over the past few months. I plead that you do not allow camps to damage our natural spaces further and enable everyone to enjoy our parks and open spaces. We need clean air and parks more than ever, and not having access to natural areas would significantly limit the quality of life for Portland citizens.

Testimony is presented without formatting.