

# Douglas Armstrong

**#267255 | March 12, 2021**

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

Mayor - Ted Wheeler Commissioners - Jo Ann Hardesty Mingus Mapps Dan Ryan Carmen Rubio  
RE : S2HC - Shelter To Housing Continuum As has been clearly evident since the public commentary has broadened out there is a great deal of anxiety in and around the S2HC debate. From the perspective of East Portland most of this anxiety has centered around previous attempts to shelter those citizens of Portland who have sought assistance in becoming less vulnerable to both the elements and landscape of our streets. Based on past and ongoing performance there are serious causes for concern as group housing has been made available in East Portland. We all agree that we are in a crisis and our most vulnerable citizens have become victims of circumstance in this debate. Having seen and heard many presentations on this incredibly important topic a few points have been made abundantly clear. When it comes to the actual availability of vacant or underutilized land East Portland is the largest target on the map. With our distant and most recent history around gentrification of inner areas of Portland, citizens have been driven to less expensive areas with East Portland being the main destination. Available housing stocks are still relatively affordable and rental stocks tend to be older and less expensive. This is both positive and negative. While this is a benefit to first time home owners and renters of limited means it also means available land stock for houseless shelters and community based camping will be more financially viable for the city of Portland as is clearly evidenced by BPS own reporting. The S2HC code proposals will disproportionately affect our most vulnerable citizens. The city of Portland has, over the past several years, placed equity at the head of any discussion. East Portland has become the focal point for the equity discussion and if these proposed code changes become reality it will place a heavier burden on all citizens who can achieve positive life outcomes. With our lack of access to higher wage centers in East Portland having open camping or allowing an overabundance of shelters will have the knock on effect for future high wage center buildout in East Portland. Concentrating the houseless in East Portland will also drive our communities deeper into poverty which will in turn have further harsh realities for struggling families and members of our marginalized communities. Lack of oversight or outreach in siteing future shelters or open area camps. Past initiatives have proven problematic in that even though community engagement was a component to siteing shelters little regard was given to valid opinions from community members. These past engagements leave East Portland residents leery and deflated as to what will actually be considered when engagements might occur in the future. East Portland also has seen a growth in open camping in greenspaces. Although not authorized currently the code amendments could allow this use in the future. These

current sites have little to no city interaction and a bare minimum of oversight. Current long term camping sites have had and continue to have detrimental environmental impacts. With most drainages leading to or being in protected watersheds allowing these forms of housing in the future will critically distress areas where previous efforts to cleanup industrial impacts proved successful. Based on what East Portland can clearly see now in our greenspaces and on our sidewalks we are sceptical as to how the city of Portland will adequately oversee any additions to the shelter or greenspace allowance. Increased crime and predatory behavior This is a reality now based on the previous siteings in East Portland. While not blaming the houseless for this problem in particular it is more than adequately documented that those that are houseless face innumerable hurdles that need adequate infrastructure and services to address their most basic needs. The current lack of criminal code enforcement and a police force that is stretched thin has made East Portland open territory for those that would prey on the houseless and our most vulnerable populations. Add to this the rapid uptick of gun violence and you quite literally have innocent people caught in the crossfire. Allowing more shelters or open area camping in East Portland will only aggravate an already nearly untenable situation. Decreased livability and negative health outcomes With a current lack of easy access to services for East Portland residents basic needs such as food, well paying jobs and health care adding more people in need will only increase the need and dilute the services now offered. With no additional infrastructure built prior to the code changes this places East Portland even further behind in all areas of life. When East Portland was first platted for road infrastructure it was with the intention of a population of no more than 65,000 we are now well past double that amount and if current projections prove correct we can expect the initial population numbers yet again. Without a cogent plan in place to increase investment ten fold in East Portland putting these code changes into effect will only widen our already disparate gaps in providing a safe livable environment for all. Regards Douglas Armstrong EPLUTC - Chair

Testimony is presented without formatting.