

Dave Fogerson

#267258 | March 13, 2021

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

I very strongly oppose the city of Portland's proposed inclusion of public park space to be used as a source of land for meeting homeless shelter needs in the Shelter to Housing Continuum Project. Parks serve a public purpose that is fundamentally incompatible with the siting of such shelters. I am a Portland resident who routinely walks trails at the Mount Tabor Park and Powell's Butte Nature Park. I know the impacts that siting homeless shelters there would have, including environmental harm to the natural park setting, the introduction of trash and visual blight, and the intimidation of visitors who are hesitant or unwilling to risk encounters with shelter inhabitants who abuse drugs or are mentally unstable. Homeless people do need help with shelter and many other things, and I applaud the project's intent to identify public lands that could be used to meet these needs. But as noted by city staff on the Project website, there are "plenty" of non-park sites zoned to allow shelters. Park space can be protected without affecting the city's goals. I do not take any solace in the Project's limitation on the use of park space to a temporary basis, defined as a 180-day period. Temporary has a habit of becoming permanent, and the problems of homelessness are not going to be solved in six months. Portland has been under "emergency" conditions for years. I chose to live where I do largely because of the proximity to Mt Tabor Park. I treasure the beauty and peace that can be found there. The park is not only a bird and wildlife sanctuary, it is a refuge for people that is very accessible to all the city's residents. One of Portland's best views is the one that looks west from atop Mt Tabor over the park's reservoirs to downtown. People by the hundreds go to the park every day to see it. They won't if the city were to locate a shelter encampment there. Please protect Mt Tabor and all the city's parks from this ill-advised element of the Shelter to Housing Continuum Project. The potential harm to these beautiful parks is unnecessary and too high a price for inclusion in the Project. Portland has identified many other public and private properties that are much more suitable for this purpose and the city should focus its efforts on those properties.

Testimony is presented without formatting.