

Jan Cassetta

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

I am opposed to allowing public parks to be used for camping and shelters due to the following concerns: Drug paraphernalia such as needles pose a threat to children, adults, and pets. Sanitation hazards such as human waste and debris accumulation attract vermin and present a possible health crisis of communicable disease. The destruction of valuable and in some cases irreplaceable park plantings and wildlife habitat will result from overuse. Green spaces in which to recreate are especially important now due to the confinement from the pandemic but citizens will not use the parks if they feel they are unsafe. Fires used by campers for cooking purposes pose a real fire danger that a dry park in the summer might be accidentally set ablaze along with the adjacent neighborhood. The wildfire crisis this past summer should give us all pause to think about such an event. It should be noted that the city's fire fighting capacity at that time was greatly reduced since most of our firefighters were in the surrounding counties fighting fires there. A better solution to the housing problem is for the city to establish sanctioned camps in designated locations which would have social services available to deal with mental health and drug induced crises as well as job counselors to assist those seeking employment. While the use of our park space may appear to present a short term solution it will only create longer term problems for the city. Residents are now more mobile than ever since so many can work remotely from home. If families decide that Portland no longer provides a safe, peaceful and healthy environment for them in which to raise their children they will move out of the city. This will lead to an erosion of the tax base and a downward spiral in the services that the city can afford. Therefore I urge the city council to amend the proposal in order to exempt city parks and school areas from camping. Respectfully submitted, Jan Cassetta

Testimony is presented without formatting.