



SWTrails PDX

Promoting walking and cycling in
SW Portland, OR

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March 15, 2021

Dear Mayor Wheeler & Members of the Portland City Council –

****Regarding the Planning and Sustainability Commission's recommended changes to the *Shelter to Housing Continuum Zoning Code* to be considered at your March 17th Council session, Item #166**

My name is Doug Rogers and I am the Board President for SWTrails PDX. We are an all-volunteer, nonprofit community organization working to promote the health and wellness of our neighbors by supporting walking and biking in the beautiful hills of SW Portland. We build and maintain trails, we work with the City of Portland to develop new routes for walking and biking opportunities for our neighborhood residents, and we advocate for more resources for SAFE walking, hiking, and biking.

We strongly agree with Multnomah County Commissioner **Sharon Meieran's**, statement in the 3-7-21 *Oregonian*: "There is a humanitarian crisis facing us in Multnomah county. Thousands of people are living outside in unsafe and unhealthy conditions, with inadequate shelter or medical care... unacceptable from a health, safety and human decency standpoint." Truly a shocking crisis for our very resourceful community that has more than enough to share for those in truly greatest need. ***Our City and our County must help those in need to come in out of the cold, and the rain, and be treated with the same decency and compassion that we provide for our own children and families.*** Action is needed NOW.

We have long been a partner with SW Neighborhoods, Inc. (SWNI) in support of those activities that will improve the quality of life for our local residents. We also support most of the concepts included in the *Shelter to Housing Continuum (S2HC) project* to help the houseless/homeless in our community. ***However, we do not support inclusion of Open Space Zones for consideration as temporary shelters, except for a declaration of emergency by the City council due to a catastrophic natural disaster.***

We agree with SWNI's #1 reason for this position: "There is no need to use Open Space Zones, including parks, natural areas, and trails, for shelters **as there are adequate vacant and underutilized sites available without the use of Open Space Zones.** Our coalition members are interested in working with partners to help identify *available sites in our neighborhoods, if needed*" (SWNI Testimony re: S2HC, March 12, 2021 – please see attached). For example, the city-owned, "Sears Army Reserve Center" on SW Multnomah Blvd (& 25th) has been used before, and is now available. SWNI volunteers then identified 4 other key supporting reasons not to include Open Space Zones for temporary shelters – please see the attachment with their detailed assessment.

THANK YOU for all your efforts to resolve this crisis. We know this is a complicated, complex problem that needs all of our citizens to support constructive change. There are no easy answers here, but we do want to *avoid sacrificing those hard earned and valued special places in our City – our parks and open spaces – that benefit the whole community just as they are now.*

DOUG ROGERS, President, SWTrails PDX

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