

Christine Colasurdo

#267352 | March 14, 2021

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

Dear Portland City Council: As a tax-paying Portlander, I am writing to urge the Council to not approve the Housing Continuum Project amendment to allow shelters in city parks and green spaces. Erecting shelters, even for 180 days, is a misuse of city parks and open spaces and an abuse of decision-making power. These spaces are for not for residential use; they are for wildlife as well as for people's health and wellness. To change city law regarding their use is not a trivial action and should be instead put before the public. It is public land. The public should decide. In this Anthropocene Age of climate change and decreasing biodiversity, it is a misguided idea to take away green spaces from Portland's urban environment. Portland's wildlife is already in decline. Multiple droughts have stressed and/or killed many trees, especially the Western Redcedar. Portland should be expanding its green spaces rather than looking at them as blank spaces that could be built over. I feel I must raise my voice for the voiceless: for the birds, mammals, insects, plants and other species that need Portland's parks and green spaces but do not have the ability to testify. I understand that unhoused people (many of whom are not from Portland) present a crisis for Portland; however, Portland's parks and green spaces are not the proper legal solution for the homeless crisis. Spending taxpayer money to erect shelters for 180 days in a park is an abuse of power. Parks are not residential sites. They were not ever designed for that purpose. One could argue that they are exactly the opposite of a residential site. They are "breathing spaces" that are offer a health-promoting contrast to the built environment for all species, not just humans. Is there no place in Portland where wildlife can seek refuge and shelter? Is there no place in Portland where we say, "This green space is for other species besides Homo sapiens. We will let other species thrive and humans can visit during the day"? Must we view all land as a commodity for human habitation? To consider public parks a place for shelters is profoundly disrespectful of the role of parks in the health of the city. To take away public parks from public use is an abuse of power. To re-designate parkland as residential land is likewise an abuse of power. To deprive wildlife and other species of open space in an urban environment is misguided and unfortunate in this Sixth Great Age of Extinction. Please think carefully about the consequences of such a proposal. I would argue that erecting residential shelters on parkland not only does not solve the crisis regarding the unhoused population but it creates more problems than it solves and is an unethical use of political power. Please show respect for Portland's public parks and green spaces. Please protect our wildlife. Please recognize the important of our parks system. Please do not change laws to erect shelters in Portland's parks. Sincerely, Christine Colasurdo

Testimony is presented without formatting.