

Jeffrey Martin

#267473 | March 15, 2021

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

Dear Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners Hardesty, Ryan, Mapps, and Rubio: Last May my neighbors elected me as the president of the Laurelhurst Neighborhood Association (LNA). Since then, I have continually received concerns from my neighbors that not enough is being done in our city to address an affordable housing crisis that is evidenced by a proliferation of tents, sleeping bags, trash, broken down cars and RV's throughout our neighborhoods and on our streets. The LNA shares the City Council's sense of urgency for finding solutions to this crisis, but the Shelter to Housing Continuum Proposal (the "S2HC") as written falls short. At last week's meeting of the LNA membership, my neighbors uniformly agreed that sanctioned camps are a viable means to provide immediate housing for the homeless but unanimously objected to the S2HC proposal that would permit the siting of such camps in and around schools and parks. I was tasked by my neighbors to send this letter to communicate the LNA's position that the S2HC proposal is deeply flawed for the reasons listed below.

1. Parks and open spaces should NOT be used for camping or shelters. Portland is a large, dense urban setting. The need for open space and parks has never been greater. Homeless camps damage these areas making them unusable for their intended purpose. Garbage, used syringes, human feces, fires, damage to park settings and threatening behavior have all been continually reported and documented at illegal park camps. 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. The S2HC proposal needs to be revised to prohibit camping in and around our schools and parks.
2. Camp siting criteria should address livability, health and safety issues that would affect the surrounding community. For example, children's safety is imperative and no camps should be located near schools or playgrounds. Also, business areas will not be able to retain employees or attract customers due to safety concerns if camps are located adjacent to them. The S2HC proposal needs to be revised to prohibit camping in and around our schools and parks and take into account the impact on adjacent businesses.
3. New camp placement should consider how many camps/shelters already exist in an area so that no neighborhood or city area is oversaturated. For example, currently Southeast Portland has 82 reported camps versus 40 reported camps in Northeast Portland and fewer than 25 reported camps in North, Northwest and Southwest Portland. The LNA supports well placed, sanctioned, monitored, larger camps that utilize economies of scale to help contain operating costs. These sanctioned camps should provide the residents with resources to satisfy their basic hygiene needs and make social services available to help with mental health and addiction problems, as well as job counselors to assist those seeking employment. Citizens are

weary of the chaos that envelopes our city when unsanctioned camping is permitted or ignored in our neighborhoods. We all benefit when our neighbors, especially our seniors and families with small children, feel safe. If passed as currently written, S2HC will exacerbate our inability to keep our neighborhood parks clean and safe for everyone's use and accelerate Portland's deteriorating livability. Please consider all stakeholders and amend the S2HC proposal to exempt city parks and school and playground areas from camping. Jeff Martin President, Laurelhurst Neighborhood Association

Testimony is presented without formatting.