

Philip Bagdade

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

Mr. Mayor and Members of the City Council: I have happily called Portland home for eight and a half years and recently bought my first home--a condo at the north end of the Pearl. For many of my fellow Portlanders and me, living in the urban center and being participatory Portlanders walking and biking around town whenever possible has meant forfeiting on space, especially yards and greenspaces. I have always plotted my trips around town to be able to enjoy the beautiful green spaces that dot our city. It has been brought to my attention that this experience is endangered. Portland faces a real crisis with its houseless population. Clearly we must be compassionate and supportive of our fellow man, but there must also be a limit upon the extent of our willingness and ability to offer help. The Open Space Zones provision in the recent Shelter to Housing Continuum recommendations crosses that threshold and is a greater threat to the health of our municipality than the housing crisis itself. Parks promote community and, at their best, trust and safety. The understanding that parks are something we share and can enjoy privately or socially is a critical element in the social fabric of any welcoming, homely, and cohesive city. The proposal to indefinitely allow camping in our parks will undoubtedly impair the parks' role in our city's health and could very well exacerbate the city's most dire issue by weakening the bond between Portlanders. More practically, parks have created desirable neighborhoods often populated with higher-income households living in higher property tax homes. I already know several high earners who have departed city for the suburbs at least in part because of negative experiences with the houseless population. Be sure, if our parks are opened to camping, there will be more out-migration and our city's damaged core will be even closer to collapse. Concernedly, Philip Bagdade

Testimony is presented without formatting.