

Carol Kruse

#277705 | March 16, 2021

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

Portland City Council: The environmental impacts of outdoor shelter are real and are difficult, if not impossible, to mitigate. Chapter 33.296 of the Portland City Code “allows short-term and minor deviations from the requirements of the zoning code for uses that are truly temporary in nature, will not adversely impact the surrounding area and land uses, and which can be terminated and removed immediately.” Siting permanent or temporary shelters in the Open Space Zone would be in direct conflict with the intent of this chapter. When protected and well managed, urban wildlife habitat makes important and measurable contributions not only to urban wildlife, but also to clean air and clean water. Sadly, these areas are already under stress. We see around us the negative environmental impacts resulting from unsanctioned camping in open space. It does not take long for the things we value most in our parks, natural areas and trails to be destroyed by overuse or inappropriate use. Siting larger, sanctioned camps or shelters in parks or natural areas, even on a “temporary” basis, is a policy decision that would do irreparable harm. Allowing shelters in public open space removes that space from use for intended park purposes by everyone else. And creates dangerous situations that can imperil the lives and safety of Portland residents - especially making it unsafe for our children and for women to walk around daytime or nighttime without being harassed or worse. We must find a solution for the large homeless community that DOES NOT bring dangerous, unhygienic, and crime-prone groups into established neighborhoods- that just creates another problem that impacts many and is thus not a good solution. Increasingly, Portland residents live in spaces with no yard or outdoor area whatsoever. As our population increases and densifies, the role of parks, natural areas and trails becomes more and more essential. Looking ahead, the need for even more parks and open space will be critical to maintain our region’s livability for all. Changing the allowed uses for properties in the Open Space Zone makes it unavailable for its intended use. Over the past twenty years, voters like me, have consistently approved tax measures to address inequities in access to parks, natural areas, and trails, most recently approving a new Parks levy in November 2020, in the midst of the pandemic. Also tax levies to specifically help the homeless. Obviously, access to these special places is important to the people of Portland, and should not turn them into homeless tent villages. Please amend language in 33.296.030.G to remove the Open Space Zone from consideration as either temporary or permanent houseless shelters EXCEPT for a declaration of emergency by the City Council due to a catastrophic natural disaster such as an earthquake and amend language in the new provision 33.296.030.H to add an exception for the Open Space Zone. Thank you, Carol Kruse

Testimony is presented without formatting.