

Sharon Rae Richen

#277812 | March 16, 2021

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

I am Rae Richen. I live in Northeast Portland. Please read my testimony because I will not be able to testify on the 17th. I will be mentoring middle school students with reading and math difficulties. As a member of Rose City Park Presbyterian Church and a worker in the efforts of the Interfaith Alliance on Poverty, I speak from the perspective of the Portland's active faith community. We clearly see the need to pass the recommended zoning changes in S2HC. We know the city has been working very hard to create more low-income housing. However, these, our neighbors, can't wait for housing construction to catch up with need. Their desperation is now, and it is already in the backyards of all our neighborhoods, so, let's not pretend that efforts to zone for solutions will bring down the value of our property and the quality of our lives. Look around us. The desperate need for housing is impacting our city in every quadrant. And more to the point, it is killing our unhoused neighbors, those with underpaying jobs, those who have lost jobs due to Covid, those with disabilities, and those with children. In order to work more effectively on the housing problem, please extend the Housing Emergency declaration that expires this April. Please remove the restrictions on tiny homes on wheels and RVs. Please look at the Zoning code as a document that reflects the city's moral code, and the moral code of all our Interfaith congregations. Focus zoning decisions to help many non-profits and others improve the safety and quality of life for our most vulnerable neighbors. I hope our City Council members will consider additional amendments to S2HC that will make it possible to develop creative and healthy methods for housing and supporting our un-housed neighbors. Please consider zoning that can be stable, not short term, that can provide for mailing needs, mental health, physical health and hygiene needs to go with a trusted roof. Please provide more zoning flexibility that will protect the un-housed from the constant need to be on guard against sweeps and harassment. S2HC promises to make it possible for our unhoused neighbors and the non-profits who care about them to find safer ways to live together. Options of self-regulated villages such as Right to Dream Too and Agape Village can help people stabilize lives. With a stable life, and support services, people can find ways to move from the streets into a variety of shelter and life options. The options proposed in S2HC can create a life where sweeps are not a constant fear, where our neighbors can be supported in making positive change in their lives. It can improve the value of our neighborhoods by living up to the imperative to love our neighbors as ourselves. p.s. I have included a file from Transitions Projects report on Homelessness which shows the distribution of the homeless population during the 2019 Point in Time Count. You may know these facts, but it never hurts to be reminded of the important perspectives that get lost in the yelling,

such as that most homeless are not drug addicts when they become homeless.

Testimony is presented without formatting.