

# Dianna Benting

**#277928 | March 16, 2021**

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

"Portions of the language in the Shelter to Housing Continuum recommendations from the Planning and Sustainability Commission, in short, allow homeless tent camps in Portland parks, golf courses and greenways for up to 180 days. This provision will, in fact, remove parks and/or "open spaces" from public use. Historical and present experience shows that homeless camps have a detrimental impact on the safety and livability of surrounding spaces. Because of the nature of long-term camping coupled with drug use and mental illness these camps accumulate garbage, involve safety hazards: open fires, needles, theft, rape, assault and spread disease. The provision is not merely permission for people with no other option to use Open Space along with other members of the public. It will cause our OS zones to turn into a health and safety hazard and be a significant deterrent to their recreational use by children and adults. This has already been proven and is currently a prime example around the city. Our compassion for the unsheltered should be focused on utilizing funding in the highest use available for aid. This is NOT dispersing camps throughout the city where resources are spent on travel and time by agencies. The highest use of the available funds is to have camps located on city, PBOT or Metro grounds that are un-used by the public, not taxed on the public and where camps can be monitored for safety and services are central, available and supportive of getting the campers the help they need, and want. Open space, as stated in our current code, "is intended to preserve and enhance public and private open, natural, and improved park and recreational areas." It goes on to list the functions of OS zones, none of which include allowing camping on taxpayer property thereby making it unusable by the majority. 180 days in a natural area, urban forest, preservation of scenic qualities, opportunities for outdoor recreation, preservation for our watersheds, of our water quality and drainage systems? It takes only days to negatively impact these, almost all of us in Portland have already been impacted. It will change our city irrevocably if left to continue and put into our charter." We need solutions to the current homelessness, not changing zoning codes to expand the homeless population. The meaning of proposed changes should be widely communicated to the public in clear language and should not be considered without significant public discussion and input."

Testimony is presented without formatting.