

**A dozen reasons why allowing outdoor living in parks and natural areas is
a really bad idea**

Amanda Fritz testimony 3/16/21

1. Parks belong to everyone. Everyone should feel welcome in them. You don't need an invitation to visit your neighborhood park. Allowing some people to make their home in a park is contrary to these principles. I am not welcome in a place that is someone's home unless they invite me in.
2. Sanctioned outdoor shelter areas work best when the area is defined, allowing limits on the number of inhabitants to promote social distancing/overcrowding (even after the pandemic, people living outside will need personal space) and community cohesion. Larger groups become difficult for settlement leaders to manage and enforce rules that the community sets. R2DToo and CP3O are examples of this principle.
3. Even when an area is defined, if it is part of a larger land mass non-sanctioned outdoor living will happen in the larger area. The street at Laurelhurst Park started as a defined area then the tents spread into the park – plus the street was not available to others who wanted to use it.
4. Allowing shelters in park parking lots would lead to tents in the park, plus seniors and others with mobility challenges would be denied access to the parking and hence to the park.
5. Anyone who has done recreational camping on grass knows it is unpleasant in winter due to mud and in summer due to grassy areas having no shade. Shelters in forested areas destroy the ecosystem. Full-time living outside for months with many occupants exacerbates these issues.
6. Many areas of Portland are park-deficient, and we don't have enough developed parkland per capita. Now more than ever, people need outdoor recreation and activities. We need more park space, not less.
7. The City has invested millions in development, maintenance and restoration of parks and open spaces. Allowing people to live there and harm the resources will waste taxpayers' money. Think about Waterfront Park after every festival – complete reurfing is needed, paid for by the festival. The taxpayers of Portland will pay for the damage done by establishing shelters in parks and natural areas – at a time when we know there is a maintenance funding gap of over \$400 million in Parks already.
8. Portlanders voted to approve the Parks levy to increase access to parks. There was no mention of outdoor living in the ballot measure. Indeed, it states as the first primary purpose of the levy, "Enhance and preserve parks, rivers, wetlands, trees, and other important natural features for the benefit of all Portlanders and wildlife." Parks belong to all Portlanders. Natural areas belong to the wildlife. The levy promised more access for more people, and better maintenance.

9. Removing some of Portland's parkland inventory for temporary housing would be contrary to the purpose and methodology for requiring System Development Charges on new construction.
10. Many parks were developed with grants or bequests specifying the land must be used only for recreational purposes.
11. Golf is an Enterprise Fund in Portland Parks, dependent on revenue for operations and maintenance. Using golf courses for outdoor shelter would require compensation from the General Fund for decreased revenue and damage to the course.
12. BES and PWB are rate-funded. Allowing outdoor living on properties owned by these bureaus would require compensation from the General Fund for the use and for remediation of damage to grass on developed sites and restoration of natural areas where the utilities have invested millions to protect water quality and stormwater management. Plus, properties such as the Foster Floodplain and Brookside Park are subject to inundation by Johnson Creek – that's a primary function of these sites. For any City-owned properties proposed to be used for outdoor shelter, the Commissioner in Charge of the bureau owning the property must have the authority to decide whether or not a requested site is used.