

Kyle Roth

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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 for up to 180 days. This provision will, in fact, remove parks 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, and expose citizens to safety hazards, including open fires, needles, and other hazardous waste. The provision is not merely permission for people with no other option to use Open Space (OS) along with other members of the public. Instead, it will cause our OS zones to turn into a health and safety hazard and be a significant deterrent to their existing recreational use by children and adults alike. A cursory look at the existing living habits of Portland's homeless serves as a historic example. Our compassion for the unsheltered should be focused on utilizing preallocated funding in the most effective way possible, such as city-monitored and regulated zones where camping may be permitted without encroaching on taxpayers' freedoms. 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, 6 months has already impacted almost all of us in Portland. It will change our city irrevocably if left to continue and ultimately put into our charter.

Testimony is presented without formatting.