

# Wes Shoger

**#278218 | March 16, 2021**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony regarding the proposed code changes for the city's ongoing efforts with the Shelter to Housing Continuum Project (S2HCP). In reading some of the code changes proposed through the S2HCP process, I agree with the majority of the proposed changes and I am looking forward to making it easier to locate permanent and temporary shelters in Portland, and this will be a great step forward if approved. However, one aspect of the proposal that gives me great concern is the code changes allowing siting of temporary facilities within Open Space (OS) zones. My particular concern with this specific item is the apparent assumption people hold that camping, tents, and other informal shelters associated with "mass and outdoor shelters" is a low-impact activity. The reality of that assumption is incorrect, in which it can negatively affect the environment (compacts soils, damages trees, impacts stormwater quality, etc). Such impacts would greatly conflict with the intent of the code according to 33.100.010 "Purpose" and also sets a negative precedent whereby the city would on one hand be allowing for development-related activities that are not properly mitigated for (e.g., tree protection, tree planting requirements, etc), and on the other hand requiring and holding private development to much different standards with respect to city code. Issues related to mass shelters in areas not designed to handle their development: -Foot traffic, camping, and household items stored at these sites all compact soil and limit water to tree and vegetation roots, killing the plants. Compacted soil can stress or kill trees and make them susceptible to drought and disease (summers are getting much hotter). Compacted soils will also worsen stormwater runoff as water is not able to filter through their profiles and contributes to excess runoff. -With the exception of existing concrete or gravel pads; mass-type shelters and camping will kill vegetation and also inhibit future regrowth from compacted soils. -Attachment to trees with various camp-related items is not good for the trees. -Development codes, such as Title 11 (Tree Code), require property owners with developments preserving trees on site, to maintain large fenced-off spaces underneath tree canopies where no foot traffic or construction is allowed. Allowing developments within OS opens the potential for some of these sites to be located in contradiction with the Title 11 development code. -Slippery slope argument, but if the city approves of one location in the OS zone, other "informal" setups may sprout up and assume the activity is welcomed throughout. Future world demands weighing on our city will require us to extract as many ecological services out of our natural areas as we can if we are going to mitigate the effects of climate change and create a livable city. We have many areas of opportunity to enhance the natural environment in the city within the OS zones, but unmitigated outdoor camping that is occurring at

its current state will impede these efforts. The current proposal allowing for temporary outdoor shelters within OS zones is misguided and I strongly urge this specific code language to be removed for the final version. Thank you for your time and service, Wes Shoger

Testimony is presented without formatting.