

Judi Kloper

#278260 | March 17, 2021

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

Reading the recommended draft of the Shelter to Housing Continuum Project, I found myself aghast at one part of it, and I am writing to voice my very strong opposition to the use of public parks and spaces as camping spaces for people who are houseless/homeless. When I move from Corvallis to SE Portland in 2016, I rented an apartment and watched over time as the perimeter of Laurelhurst Park became home to numerous people who were houseless. The trash began accumulating and used needles were on the ground out in the open. I have visited numerous Portland parks over the past few years, and have ridden my bike through some of them, and have been appalled at how much the misuse of these public spaces has expanded. I now own a home in the Pearl and walk a lot in the many NW neighborhoods. During the last year of Covid, these public spaces have become even more necessary as a place for friends to safely gather. These parks and open spaces are parks for all families and individuals to enjoy and to use. The houseless people who are camping adjacent to these spaces/parks, and those who are now camping in them, have created obstacles for the rest of us who wish to use them as they are intended. I am tired of having to be cautious of where I walk, not just because of dog poop but because of human feces, garbage everywhere, and the needles. How do you, our elected city councilors, expect us to enjoy a park when it is full of garbage, needles, and human excrement? Just the consideration of this proposal suggests to me that you have very little regard for the value of our public parks and open spaces, and not much respect for the individuals and families who use these parks for recreation and enjoyment. There are many issues related to houselessness and homelessness, and I am sorry if I appear callous about these issues. I can assure you that I am not. My own older daughter was homeless for five years, living on the streets, in parks, and under bridges in Albany as she continued to experience severe mental health issues due to her continued use of meth. I am very aware of the issues. (I am happy to say that now she is living a much better life and making good choices.) And even with that experience as a parent of a houseless person, I am still deeply opposed to allowing ANY homeless encampment in Portland's beautiful parks and open spaces. The recent article in the Oregonian (March 12, 2021) detailed how Portland has gone from "Stumptown" to "Dumptown." Why would you even consider adding to that perception and reality by allowing our parks to legally become a dumping ground? And as far as the proposed 180-day limit, we all know that can be extended again and again. Opening them up to anyone for camping will only make the blight of homelessness worse for Portland. All that I have written here is not to say that our houseless citizens do not need a place to live safely. It IS to say that we who live here and pay taxes here also deserve to have clean open spaces and parks. Those

who are houseless deserve housing, services, and work. Make THAT happen (we voters have certainly voted enough funds for that to happen!), and please protect our parks from the blight that is already infecting this once-beautiful city.

Testimony is presented without formatting.