

Donna Cohen

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

My name is Donna Cohen and I live in St Johns. I am so pleased to see Portland continue to make efforts to deal with the crises of affordable housing and houslessness which has only been exacerbated by COVID. First, please extend the Housing State of Emergency. If we are not in an emergency now, I don't know what would qualify. Second, as we know, zoning restrictions make it much harder to respond to the need for housing options, especially for those most in need. The changes proposed by the Planning and Sustainability Bureau should be approved. Specifically, I support expanding the locations for siting sanctioned outdoor shelters to many available open spaces throughout the city. I know there is contention about parks land. Although I believe we can mostly avoid using parks I also think that some of our parks are quite large enough that a small slice can be tapped for this important use. I happen to live in an affordable housing development that was protested by neighbors because they wanted to continue to walk their dogs among the prior existing undeveloped park there. No matter that ¼ of a mile away was another much larger park, no matter that 115 families would be able to purchase their first homes because of the conversion of their dog walk area. Sometimes we just have trouble seeing beyond our own needs – especially when it comes to responding to others in need of housing. For some locations we should not require traditional water/sewer connections where we or residents can provide alternatives such as with RVs or city provided sanitary facilities. I think about the Safe Parking program in Los Angeles where folks can park their cars or trailers safely overnight at a guarded location with sanitary amenities. A simple place to park one's car and not be hassled can do a lot for a decent night's sleep. Please continue to push the envelope for safe, stable housing and shelter in Portland. We have no time to lose. Thank you.

Testimony is presented without formatting.