

Peter Samson

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

I am writing to support the provisions of the S2HC proposal. It's clear that in order for people to receive the care and support they need a new vision around housing is required. I support the Shelter to Housing Continuum's proposal to amend City code to allow greater flexibility for people to find lodging in our city. It's inspiring easy to see the way people experiencing hardship are able to come together to organize, guard belongings, and create a space where people can get a full night's sleep and help form a community. Too often a person gets into housing and then struggles to stay there because they are cut off from the community they have known and might lack access to vital mental health and treatment support. The pandemic has offered a stark look at how inhospitable the street can be for humans – responding to this crisis means being creative about the spaces we create for people to live and thrive. We need to embrace new village models, offer easy access to hygiene facilities, garbage collection, and mental health and social services for those who need that support. As I know you are doing, please make every effort to implement Portland Street Response staff and services as widely and quickly as possible! As a resident of the Multnomah neighborhood, I would be specifically supportive of redeploying the former Sears Armory as was done several years ago. It is shameful that such a city-owned facility with a history of sheltering people sits empty when the housing emergency is so dire and voter-approved funding is about to become available to address the problem. Initial resistance to the project by neighbors eventually gave way to general support and significant donations of food, clothing, and food. Another space that deserves consideration is the back courtyard between the wings of the Multnomah Art Center, which enjoys frequent direct Tri-Met service to downtown and has space in its back parking lot for a mobile shower unit. Can the City not begin to more quickly to design a system for regular public trash collection from encampments? That would be small, but visible and important short-term step in crafting a long-term solution. There are many dispiriting scenes on the streets of Portland right now in the form of garbage, battered tents and people struggling to find the food and support they need. Changing City code and envisioning a new way of living and being together is a first step toward building a place where everyone belongs, is cared for and has a sense of stewardship in a community. Thank you for the work you do on behalf of Portland.

Testimony is presented without formatting.