

# COLLEEN MCCLAIN

**#278336 | March 17, 2021**

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

I am writing in regard to the proposed plan put forth in The Shelter to Housing Continuum project. The idea of allowing for temporary shelters in parks and open spaces for up to 180 days is absolutely unacceptable. I realize our houseless crisis is complex and continues to grow. I also realize it's easy for me to criticize from the sidelines without a deep understanding of what's been done and continues to be done to address the problems we are facing, but what I see as a resident of this city appears to be a complete failure. These proposed changes appear to be a short-term fix that amounts to a shell game. And, like many of the short-term fixes, will do long-term harm to the economic viability and livability of this city. The problems we are seeing around this city didn't start with covid. They've been happening since 2016 when the Safe Sleep Policy was adopted. Not enforcing rules around street camping and allowing camping in open spaces are the same thing and do nothing to address the long-term problem. It simply makes the city less livable for everyone. A large portion of the population camping on the streets are the "hard to house", people with chronic and serious addiction and mental health challenges. Allowing open camping isn't a fix. It isn't compassion, it's avoidance and an abdication of responsibility to this community. The proposed 'solutions' will only encourage more homeless people to live in our accommodating city. What happens if these changes pass? Is it considered pencils down and no more work is needed? I sincerely wish/hope the same effort and hours that have been put into creating this plan are being put into a long-term plan. Before anything is passed, I'd like to see the following: 1) What is the longer-term plan to address the needs of the houseless and specifically, the "hard to house"? What is the framework for this plan? Is a team in place? Are organizations working together with the same effort that was put into this plan? What is the timeline? How will progress be measured? 2) Existing Camps. What is the enforcement plan for shutting down existing camps? How will clean-up be managed and on what timeline? What enforcement will be in place to make sure these existing camps don't re-establish? Lack of resources and enforcement of existing camping rules didn't just start during covid. This has been a growing problem since 2016. How will it be managed going forward? 3) Camp Management. How will camps be managed? Allowing camping in open spaces with no infrastructure to handle the number of houseless we are seeing is creating another crisis. How will sanitation, health and safety, needle disposal, fire hazards and trash and cleanup be managed? Who (what organization) is responsible for camp management? How will that organization be held accountable? The management plan described here is very vague. A detailed management plan needs to accompany this plan. 4) Camp locations/distributions. This plan expresses the desire to evenly distribute camps throughout the city.

The argument that most of the designated areas are on the east side due to the fact that there's more available land is not good rationale or policy. Fair and equitable distribution needs to be found. Before any changes are passed, I'd like to see concrete answers to the above questions. Please don't implement another plan that will exacerbate existing problems and create more problems in the future. This will have long term impacts on the economic viability and livability of this city. Please pull the necessary resources and organizations together and treat this as the crisis it is.

Testimony is presented without formatting.