

# Holly DeGrow

**#278348 | March 17, 2021**

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

I am writing to express my concerns about the S2HC proposal that will inordinately burden East Portland neighborhoods with homeless camping zones. I want to make clear from the outset that I am not anti-homeless or even anti-outdoor-encampment. People in Portland are obviously suffering and need help. Homelessness, addiction, and mental illness are problems that desperately need to be solved. However, my neighborhood of Montavilla is currently overflowing with camps where no available toilet facilities or garbage collection are available, which means piles of soggy trash, used syringes, and human waste litter sidewalks, parks, and parking lots. The city is already not doing its job in keeping East Portland safe and habitable. Why would we have faith that this new plan would make anything better for East Portland residents? The current plan under consideration, in particular the map outlining available camping areas in yellow, puts the onus of support on communities who are already themselves suffering from poverty, lack of social services, and food deserts. Gateway has been in a steady decline and businesses are struggling or closing. Residents and businesses that are able are moving farther in or farther out. This is in part due to theft, trash dumping, addicts spare changing in parking lots, and mentally ill people accosting citizens on the streets. While these conditions and business closures may have “freed up” plenty of open land by your current estimation, it does not mean the city now should be allowed to outsource homeless citizens to neighborhoods that already bear most of the burden of dealing with homeless encampments. In addition, large housing projects (such as Columbia Villa) and makeshift shelters (such as the Hansen facility) have been proven to quickly become toxic spaces where crime flourishes and the most vulnerable live in fear. This drives out those most in need of help. Why would S2HC be any different than these past failures? Instead of pushing massive numbers of homeless into one concentrated area – an area where our children will soon be walking to school, where senior citizens take public transportation daily, and where businesses are trying to make the best of a difficult situation – the city needs a plan that more equitably distributes camping zones across Portland. If we care about the homeless, we must provide spaces for them in Lake Oswego, Raleigh Hills, and Irvington, not just Montavilla, Gateway, and Johnson Creek. This may cost more, but it’s only fair. Please reconsider your approach. The future of my neighborhood depends on you. Holly DeGrow

Testimony is presented without formatting.