

Kathryn Philp

#278407 | March 17, 2021

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

Dear Mayor Wheeler and City Council Members: I am writing to express concerns about some elements of the Shelter to Housing Continuum (S2HC) code recommendations. Of particular concern are the new provisions that would allow temporary (or permanent) shelters in Open Space (OS) zones. Homelessness is a serious concern in Portland that needs to be addressed, and much of the S2HC will help address needs of the houseless community, as well as the city. That's a positive step. Providing shelter space and support services for this population is critical until a sufficient supply of permanent affordable or other very low cost housing with support services can be built. However, allowing shelters or other such activities outright in Portland's shared parks, recreation facilities and publicly-owned open areas seems misguided. The recently adopted 2035 Comprehensive Plan anticipated the need for housing in Portland for the next 20 years, and provided an adequate supply of land zoned to accommodate it. The city should prioritize use of vacant or underutilized commercial, mixed-use, residential, or even employment lands for temporary or permanent shelters or other needed facilities before allowing such use in publicly-owned open space zones. Parks and open spaces, particularly publicly-owned spaces, are meant for Portlanders to enjoy. They provide opportunity for recreation, environmental benefit, and respite from an increasingly built-out urban environment. Siting of shelters in such spaces diminishes the value they bring to the city and residents, including those currently houseless. If siting of shelters in open areas is deemed necessary due to other land supply constraints, the city should more fully explore whether there are privately or publicly owned open space areas that could accommodate such facilities without impacting the highly-valued and accessible publicly-owned parks and recreation facilities, or environmental resource areas, that benefit the city. In conclusion, please remove the Open Space zone from the array of zones in which temporary or permanent shelters may be located. If City Council determines there is a need to include an option for temporary shelters in the open space zone, please only allow those on publicly-owned land conditionally, based on criteria, with public notice and an opportunity to comment at public hearing, rather than allowing them outright. Thank you for your consideration.

Testimony is presented without formatting.