

Paul Riedmiller

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

I am strongly against the proposal to use parks for homeless shelters. Except in the case of a community emergency such as natural disasters. The first important consideration is that Parks used as parks play a very important role in the health and well being of our community, town, city, state and country. Community and people need parks to remain parks. This benefits everyone's well being. The second consideration is that a comprehensive solution to homelessness requires resources made available to the homeless, but also not ALLOWING sleeping, camping, cooking, squatting, living anywhere and everywhere, so that people are forced to use the resources made available as part of the plan. The necessary resources include safe, secure pleasant sleeping and living quarters, mental health services, medical care, jobs, jobs training, financial care, education etc. The community, corporations, and public agencies need to figure out how to provide these necessary services instead of "allowing" people to camp and live almost anywhere just because they don't want to provide and pay for services. A tough loving and kind solution is to both PROHIBIT living on the streets and parks AND PROVIDE good alternatives to that. It is not loving and caring to ALLOW living on the streets so you don't have to provide the services. The dialogue would go like this, "you cannot sleep on this bench or sidewalk etc, however here is a clean safe place you can stay. Here is mental health, here is addiction treatment, here is a job, here is job training, etc." Parks are not substitutes for what needs to be done. SHAMING people about not giving up parks is a manipulation and running away from real solutions. We need public and corporate solutions so the parks are NOT needed or allowed to be living areas. Parks should not be allowed to be dumping grounds. We need them as PARKS. There are solutions. Will we create them? Or pretend we care, when we really don't? This comment is paraphrased after reading Dr. David Illig's testimony, because I think it is spot on and matches my perspective and testimony. Please help us make Portland a shining example of a solution and not the ugliest problem. P

Testimony is presented without formatting.