

Karl Lee

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

As the co-chair of the Crystal Springs Partnership, I object to the notion of even temporary placement of shelters or camping sites in parks and greenspaces in Portland. My understanding of the proposal is for "temporary" permission of up to 180 days for such activities in parks in the city. Our organization, in conjunction with the Johnson Creek Watershed Council have invested countless hours to improve habitat, engage the public in habitat restoration in the city, and educate people on why they should care about Crystal Springs Creek, a true gem in the city. We were the recipients in 2017 as the volunteer stewards of Portland's first Salmon Sanctuary: Crystal Springs Creek. 180 days is a long time. Half a year is sufficient time to significantly degrade park and open space properties. The City of Portland has spent millions on the restoration of Crystal Springs Creek, including multiple culvert replacements and habitat improvements along Crystal Springs Creek. Public spaces along the creek include Westmoreland Park, the Brannen natural area, and Johnson Creek Park located at the confluence of Crystal Springs Creek and Johnson Creek. Current non-permitted yet allowed camping along Crystal Springs Creek near its crossing of McLoughlin Blvd adjacent to Eastmoreland Golf course property has caused water quality and habitat degradation. Uncontained, human waste and garbage finds its way to the low point in the system - the creek. Dispersed camping, even for short periods of time is not a solution or a short-term remedy to a housing crisis. The areas are too dispersed to serve well, and the fragile ecosystem is ill equipped to endure such damage. And, these parks and greenspaces become unavailable for many to enjoy, leading to more, not less problems down the road. One temporary solution is to provide space for camping in large open areas that are not parks and greenspaces. Places located near transit and community services that do not negatively impact the environment ARE available in the city. For better or worse, places such as large parking lots in mostly dead shopping malls are ideal. Contrary to parks and open spaces, these parking lots have not been the subject of restoration and care over decades. These areas were paved many years ago, served the cars and people that parked there, and are now primed for a new, if temporary use. Contrary to parks and open spaces, when and if the current crisis abates, these lots can be pressure washed and returned to their pre-occupation condition. Months-long degradation of park and green spaces takes years if not decades to recover. Lloyd Center, Clackamas Town Center come to mind. Parking areas at the Portland Expo Center, Portland Airport, and perhaps large parking areas in parks would be opportunities. In conclusion, I encourage you to not permit camping or temporary shelter in and park or open space in the city. There are alternatives, and I encourage you to consider them. Karl Lee

Testimony is presented without formatting.