

Autumn West

#278481 | March 17, 2021

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

I am a member of East Portland Equity Collective. First, I want to make clear We are not opposed to shelters; we want the city to have workable solutions for the houseless. However, we believe that this is a city-wide problem and requires a city-wide solution As proposed the zoning targets east Portland as basically the only residential neighborhood where at will zoning will be allowed without benefit of environmental or other reviews. While BPS claims there is no guarantee the majority of shelters will go into east Portland, we also know they have cited cost effectiveness as the major consideration and this is the most cost-efficient area. The city wants to put shelters where houseless people already exist and we recall how the city systematically has pushed houseless people eastward and in 2016 overran the SWC in Lents. Since it was possible to relocate houseless people then it should be equally possible to relocate them now. Eric Engstrom has tried to pacify us stating that the Joint Office of Homelessness does not have funds to open numerous shelters however, as written the code will allow ANY non-profit to set up camps with no regulations or requirements from the city, not even good neighbor agreement. This is a violation of Portland's stated goals of equity. In 2017 Lents town hall major Ted Wheeler made a pledge that he would "not deliberately pursue policies that would make the problem more exacerbated in this community". He claimed he would encourage more city-wide participation to solve this social problem. He claimed he would work with leaders and community members in our neighborhood to address these problems in a meaningful way. Lents is a working-class neighborhood. We are Healthcare workers, grocery store workers, food servers, tradespeople. Our only grocery store closed due to theft. Store fronts in Our town center have sat vacant for years because rents outweigh profitability in our low-income neighborhood. We have one of the most culturally diverse populations in Portland and the highest rate of new black home owners. We also pay the highest assessed value taxes in the entire city yet our schools are lower rated and our streets less safe. Crime and particularly gun crimes are higher here even pre covid. Our neighborhood has been historically marginalized and neglected while more gentrified areas receive greater protection and amenities. All we are asking for is fairness, that the zoning changes be written in a way that keeps east Portland from bearing an unbalance burden and that ALL of Portland share in hosting shelters and camps. All we ask is that east Portland be treated equitably with the same consideration as the more wealthy, white and gentrified neighborhoods. I heard that people from Eastmoreland might testify today to preserve the sanctity of their white privilege golf course. This is a prime example of inequity because for years our children have had to walk to school on streets and MUP through used needles, human waste and garbage. Wildlife areas and sensitive habitats have

already been destroyed in Lents with no reinvestment or restoration by the city. We already know the city fails to hold destructive people and practices accountable and these proposed code changes will only make it worse allowing poor areas to sink further into blight while gentrified wealthy Portland pats themselves on the back.

Testimony is presented without formatting.