

Patti-Sarah Pierson

#278508 | March 17, 2021

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

First, thank you to the City Council for the focused efforts to address the accelerating crisis of individuals lacking housing within Portland. With due respect to the larger effort, I want to express that I agree with the recommendations that I believe have been proposed by at least one neighborhood association to disallow the use of the Open Space Zone for temporary or permanent houseless shelters except during a natural disaster. As a native Portlander, I'm concerned about the long-term vibrancy and economic viability of Portland. When tents and trash crowd the parks, sidewalks, and roadways of Portland, will tourists still want to travel here? Will individuals and families feel safe coming downtown to patronize restaurants, museums, etc.? And what will this lost revenue to Portland businesses mean for the city's budget and related ability to foster a vibrant city? In short – are we risking a downward spiral? Clearly, underlying structural issues and the need for social distancing are causing an overwhelming situation. But allowing tents in our city's open spaces – or anywhere within the city limits for that matter - can't be a long-term answer. If allowing temporary shelters in open spaces is the only possible option today, could such a provision at least require a quarterly re-assessment, with the goal of transitioning people to emergency housing and ending the allowance as soon as possible? With respect for the complexity of this challenge, I hope the city can design a plan that would facilitate a compassionate and effective end to camping within Portland over a designated time period, as COVID vaccines become widely available and congregate shelter space, coupled with case management, can be made more accessible. I think achieving this goal is critical to the long-term vitality of our city.

Testimony is presented without formatting.