

# Reid Psalts

**#278510 | March 17, 2021**

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

Thank you for the time. I would like to weigh in on the specific matter of tiny houses on wheels being situated on private property. For the record, I support the proposed policy changes that make THOW longer term housing, as I believe the city needs more affordable options. That said, I would like to recommend that the regulations include more definitive language about where and how a tiny house can be placed on a property. This is important because the elevation added by wheels on a tiny house puts the windows well above a standard fence height. If a property owner isn't considerate about sightlines, a tiny house can be placed on a property in a way that is intrusive to the neighboring home. Current guidelines do not regulate this at all, and if THOW are no longer going to be limited to 30 days, we need to update these regulations to protect neighboring homeowners' privacy. For the past several months, I have had to tolerate such a situation. My neighbor has rented out his yard to two tiny houses placing one in a highly intrusive location right up against our shared fence. With windows eight feet above ground level, it looks over the fence, into my backyard, and directly into my bedroom window. I have made extensive efforts to convince the land owner and occupant to reposition it and they have been unwilling to accommodate me. They deemed the placement necessary in order to squeeze a second unit onto the lot. This is against regulations, but the limit is not currently being enforced, despite multiple complaints from neighbors. I've spoken with a housing inspector about enforcing it, but even if one is removed, there is nothing requiring they reposition the THOW that looks into my window. Permanent structures have required setback distances from property lines, but tiny houses on wheels beyond requiring they be behind the house's facade. There are tips like "be a good neighbor" and "maintain as much fire distance as possible." But these are just tips, not laws. If either were put into clear language, such as mandating a specific distance from the house or fence, or barring windows from facing adjacent properties the privacy of neighbors like me could be ensured by the city. At minimum, I believe property we need mandated setbacks for THOW, and due to the heightened windows, I believe they should be a greater distance than the 6' minimum for fixed structures. I also believe the "maximize safe fire distance" tip should be made a requirement, not a recommendation. In summary, I support incorporating tiny homes into a long term housing plan for Portland, but only at the current one THOW per property limit. That rule needs to start being enforced, and I would like to see further regulations be added that bar intrusive placement of THOW as I have described. I think clear regulations are necessary to ensure good neighborly relations as we make needed updates to our housing policies. Thank you for your consideration.

Testimony is presented without formatting.