



HOUSING SENIORS | CREATING HOPE | PILOTING CHANGE

March 17, 2021

Mayor Ted Wheeler and City Commissioners
City of Portland
Attn: Council Clerk
1121 SW 4th Avenue, Room 130
Portland, Oregon 97204

RE: Council Agenda Items 165 and 166

Dear Mayor and City Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony on behalf of Northwest Pilot Project, in support of the Shelter to Housing Continuum Project which proposes zoning code changes to reduce barriers to providing more transitional and temporary shelters as well as constructing a wider variety of permanent housing.

Northwest Pilot Project is a nonprofit social service agency that serves people aged 55 and older experiencing housing instability and homelessness in Multnomah County. We work to end homelessness for low income seniors, who are among the fastest growing segment of the population experiencing homelessness. Due to structural racism, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities are disproportionately represented among the vulnerable older adults we serve.

Since the early 2010s, social service agencies have seen a notable increase in older adults seeking emergency housing assistance. More individuals are experiencing homelessness at a later age, and this generation of older adults is increasingly priced out of housing options, due to a shortage of deeply affordable housing units in our communities for those with very low and extremely low incomes. 87% of our clients have a monthly income that is below 30% AMI, and the overwhelming majority of our clients also have a disability or chronic health condition. As we continue to wrestle with the long-term social and economic impacts of the pandemic, including a looming eviction crisis across the US, low income older adults are more vulnerable than ever and more at risk of homelessness.

With increased need and decades of underinvestment in public housing, our clients face wait times for permanently affordable units that have grown exponentially. Though Northwest Pilot Project believes that homelessness ends with a permanent home, we know that additional temporary and transitional sheltering options are necessary to ensure immediate safety for our vulnerable community members, including seniors and people with disabilities. We also recognize that city code changes are necessary to expand where indoor and outdoor shelters can exist in Portland.

It is urgent that City Council enact the necessary changes to allow siting of group living in residential structures and zones, allow for small-scale housing on private property, relax conditional-use review requirements, and other important components of the Shelter to Housing Continuum Project. We also support the actions and amendments proposed by community partners including Shelter Now and Portland: Neighbors Welcome.

Northwest Pilot Project would like to share our appreciation for the many community partners that have contributed to this effort. We urge you to support the Shelter to Housing Continuum Project.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Marisa Espinoza
Public Policy Coordinator
Northwest Pilot Project