

David Kahl

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

Mr. Mayor and Honorable Council Members: While I am thankful for having had the opportunity to offer my testimony yesterday, after waiting over four hours, I was too worn out to take my prepared statement and properly edit to conform to the two-minute limit for presentation. Indeed, my hope was to better introduce myself and to lay some contextual groundwork, before proposing a plan that would fit into the intent of the amendments under consideration and which anticipate any number of objections that I heard, through the testimony of others. Alas, the constraints of time left this only half finished, leaving the more substantive portion minimally mentioned. I have attached the draft framework for our proposal, to better inform you. The full text of my prepared remarks follow: My name is David Kahl and, though I am probably better known for my musical work in the Blues community, I have also been deeply involved in causes that speak to its needs, especially those musicians who have culturally and economically enriched this area, but who have been marginalized by the very city they love and have helped to build. Years ago, I approached the City with a proposal that, in looking back, would have saved a great deal of individual, bureaucratic, and collective hardship. Its premise was simple – invest in defined arts and culture districts, developing venues through assistance by creating performance-based programs, and underwritten as musician-based jobs creation. Their minimal costs were more than balanced out by projected reduction in demands on social services, as well as multiplier effects. To give some idea of the magnitude of impact, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports over 35,000 full-time working musicians in this area, reporting an average annual income that is \$200.00 a month below the poverty threshold. Musicians and artists have, quite literally, been the canaries in the socioeconomic coalmine. Since then, the Creative Community Cooperative, the nonprofit I now head, has stepped up to the challenges of resourcefully creating means for musicians, other artists, and artisans to build owner equity in housing, workspace, and peer-driven human services. Our plan is high impact, with small footprint; scalable, self-sustaining, and self-replicating. The vision has been to build a network of cultural safe spaces, wholly owned by their residents, beginning with the poorest among us. Conventional wisdom said that bureaucratic resistance would stand in the way of the City adopting our plan, even as part of its broader strategic thinking. Sadly, the very people, who criticized singular points of contention, though they tactically addressed other related issues, did nothing to really ameliorate root causes. But enough of where we've been. The question now is where we are going. While the Creative Community Cooperative has worked to develop an alternative community and economic development platform, agile and dynamically in line with the principles of software development, its

framework has been applied to the more immediate demands of our homeless neighbors, friends, and family members. The short form takes much of the white paper foundation for our work and directs it to utilizing known structures, not only to build shelter, but to provide physical and services-based infrastructure, in five centralized locations, each of these being a magnet for more intentional communities with more specialized needs. It utilizes certain self-ordering functions, under the management and guidance of qualified, if not certified practitioners, that are already at work in more successfully functioning homeless encampments. Hazelnut Grove stands out as apparent, if not obvious, example. We emphasize a logistical approach that is married to what musicians and artists, especially in this city, know quite well – major event planning and production. Here, we have a time-tested green fields approach to nearly all the most pertinent issues we face, witnessed in such events as the Waterfront Blues Festival. Its organizers have repeatedly implemented both physical and services-based infrastructural needs for thousands of people, including crisis and emergency management, and even returning the site to previous condition, all within a total time of about two weeks. Systems, methodologies, suppliers, and other resources are already there for us to use. While we can provide further information, this would require time, more dedicated to our proposal. Suffice it to say that we see solution, not just from the standpoint of what we wish to transition from, but what we hope to transition to. Ours is an interface of resources, public and private, institutional, organizational, and individual, in the hopes of innovating our way out of this mess and on to a more purposeful, productive future. Thank you.

Testimony is presented without formatting.