

# Melissa Lucke

**#278631 | March 18, 2021**

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

As citizens of Russell-Wilkes, our neighborhood has long been a dumping ground for problems that close-in to downtown areas wish to ignore. Despite our long community history we are voiceless in the halls of PDX government where important decisions are made. Being among some of the last affordable housing in Portland, we house a population mostly split between first-time and younger house owners and senior citizens trying to make their retirement dollars stretch. We are an already fragile ecosystem and especially vulnerable to social problems. Simply put, we can't afford to give houseless people the strong social safety net they require to flourish. Decades of political neglect of East Portland translates to poor public transit, poorly maintained public properties, and a dangerously sparse police presence. Theft, vandalism, and dumping of hazardous waste (including needles and feces) are skyrocketing. People aren't just inconvenienced here; they are actively frightened. For many, it's not a matter of will they be affected by street crime, but when. Your proposed changes lack practicality. Relaxing zoning without improving community services, especially policing, creates a population with no accountability to the greater community. You want our land because it's relatively cheap. Will you then use that savings to increase community services? To expand food banks, mental health services, addiction counseling, trash disposal, etc? I'm guessing not, and so are my neighbors. It's false and frankly insulting to present this issue as one of compassion vs. NIMBY. Personally, I want houseless people to be sheltered and helped in any way they need. Well planned houseless shelters shared equally among PDX neighborhoods with accompanying well funded services is what we're asking for. Given our neighborhood's lack of political clout, I doubt we'll receive it. You are asking already marginalized people to bear the brunt of social ills created by far wealthier and more powerful people than we. Stop doing that.

Testimony is presented without formatting.