

David Worth

#278718 | March 22, 2021

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

Hello Portland City Council, First off, I'd like to thank you all for your hard work and service to our great city as you try to tackle the enormously complicated issue of how to best serve our houseless population. I understand how complex a problem this is and have extreme empathy for those affected by the issues surrounding housing and the houseless. As a citizen of Portland for most of my life, I am writing to you with some concern regarding the wording of the Shelter to Housing Continuum, specifically related to the wording in the proposed code 33.296.030 G and H and the potential impact it might have on our open spaces. Portland is famous for its outdoor spaces. Our parks are some of the best urban areas in the country and people come from far and wide to experience the incredible green spaces that grace our city. For some of us, the parks are an extension of our back yards, and more importantly, for many of us they are the only safe areas to experience the outdoors. People move to Portland because of them. Some of the city's favorite events are held annually in them. Our children play in them. They are good for our wellness and mental health. And, up to this point, the city has put in place guidelines and rules to protect our parks so that every citizen can use them safely and responsibly. While I understand the intent of the proposed code changes in the S2HC project is to cut down on the bureaucracy and red tape in order to extend aid to the houseless population, I fear that the vague language in the code does not do enough to protect our city's open spaces from irreparable damage, if and when the city decides to utilize them. In regards to 33.296.030 H, I would ask that you consider removing open spaces, community centers, and other park- or recreation-related buildings or parking lots (essentially all OS Zones) from the list of areas where temporary shelters can be installed. Setting up temporary shelters in these areas is short-sighted and may do more harm than good. Natural areas can be destroyed from overuse, taking months or years to recover, and these areas wouldn't be able to be used how they were primarily intended. Additionally, because of the temporary status, many campers who sought refuge in these place would be displaced every 180 days, disrupting their progress in becoming established and, hopefully, transitioning into a more permanent housing solution. This seems inefficient, expensive, a headache for organizations and nonprofits working to manage them, and a half-measure to serving the houseless population. I would encourage you to seek areas where temporary shelters can be established and evolve to serve the needs of the community, with the option to transition to a permanent shelter if successful. In regards to 33.296.030 G, if you intend to amend the code to include shelter shortage as a reason to declare an emergency, I again ask you to consider removing open spaces from the list of zones where temporary shelters can be set up. I am in agreement that

natural disasters or short-term disasters, such as public health emergencies, are acceptable reasons to declare states of emergency, and that parks and community centers make natural places to set up warming/cooling stations, testing facilities, etc. throughout the city, but using park- and recreation-related structures for temporary shelters for up to 180 days puts an unnecessary strain on these areas and makes public access to them extremely difficult and unusable in the way they were intended for. My argument is not with your intentions, but the unstated potential loopholes that are present in the proposed code, which could damage our important open spaces around the city. Overall, I think this proposal is a great start towards finding solution and I agree with much of what would be implemented when the final draft of this proposal is eventually accepted. I appreciate your time in considering my testimony. Thank you for your service to everyone living in Portland!

Sincerely, David

Testimony is presented without formatting.