

# Joanne Austin

**#278798 | March 23, 2021**

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

I purchased a home in SE Portland and moved here nearly 15 years ago. I appreciate that the City seems finally to be taking formal steps to try and address the homelessness crisis that has touched nearly every neighborhood in the City, particularly those of us on the east side. With respect to the Shelter to Housing Continuum initiative, I would like to register my strenuous objection to including within the definition of “open spaces” city parks, other natural areas and our community centers and adjacent parking lots and lands. These locations should be the absolute LAST places to locate - however “temporary”- encampments for houseless individuals. My home is one block from SE Powell Blvd and I have seen and experienced first-hand how easy it is for one small “camp” to turn an entire frontage road turnabout into an ever expanding collection of tents, burned out and torn apart vehicles, RV’s, bike “chop shops and drug dens for some of the inhabitants. The trash pits that accompany these encampments are public health hazards for the residents of the camps as well as neighbors and pedestrians. One of the main reasons I chose to move to Portland was the available opportunities to bike or walk the designated multi-use pathways such as the Springwater Corridor, the MUP path along I-205 and the Esplanade, among others. As a now retired single female in her sixties, I have not felt safe using any of these recreational areas for a few years, with each succeeding year getting worse, due to the proliferation of camps that have taken over vast parts of these areas. I also used to use the Mt. Scott Community Center, which has now been closed to the public and turned into a homeless shelter. The only remaining recreational opportunity available now are hikes into and around Mount Tabor. The thought that parts of this park (or any other, for that matter might be used to “temporarily” site houseless camps would further narrow the few remaining ways for folks to feel safe and enjoy the quiet solitude of natural surroundings in a city. It would also have an undeniable negative effect on the fragile ecosystems that exist there. I also strongly recommend that ANY shelters that are created, should NOT be seen as “only temporary,” but should be sited with the vision that they might become permanent. It would be a waste of more taxpayer \$\$ and limited City resources to create the infrastructure as only “temporary.” Lastly, as a former businessperson, I am very wary (and suggest you be as well) of making “temporary” plans, because temporary rarely stays temporary. Might as well be transparent about intentions here; let’s be sure that the Code very clearly states so. I fully support the City’s efforts to try and offer members of our houseless community with supported tent communities in approved areas, and believe with creative thinking, we can find OTHER sites situated in ALL quadrants of the City without further sacrificing the simple enjoyments of our parks and natural recreation areas by all of

the City's residents. The taxpayers of this City have been generous and compassionate enough already; I implore you to not spit in the face of that compassion as you consider the appropriate locales for further homeless shelters. Just say NO to inclusion of city parks and natural areas in the "Open Space" designation for purpose of the S2HC proposed regulatory changes.

Testimony is presented without formatting.