

# Sheila Goudge

**#278817 | March 23, 2021**

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

Don't get me wrong, I am concerned for our growing homeless situation. I care. While I absolutely agree that the homeless situation is complex and difficult to manage, ...the "IT'S OKAY" camping in city parks for 180 days sounds like a terrible solution. As a native Portlander senior, and I feel we cannot set a precedent for allowing homeless camping in our parks. The 180 day proposal rule is ludicrous if allowed. Legal or not, it would be hard to reverse the ruling. Property tax paying owners, with adjacent homes to our city parks etc. should not have to continue to bear the consequences or be subject to: 1. Repeated concern that homeless fires will ignite devastation and raging fires, destruction to the trees and surrounding areas let alone possible death. 2. Compromised Safety for children, families and taxpayers who enjoy the park system and its offerings. Having homeless camps in public parks threatens overall safety due to the unfortunate prevalence of mental illness and drug abuse amongst the homeless population. Already, the sidewalks are overtaken, tents and debris are everywhere. So saying it's okay to camp in our city wide park system is a good idea???? It would be insane results. We are in the middle of a pandemic, endless protesting and violence. There are multiple vacant constructed properties in the city for lease or sale or public owned props like vacant Smith school or partner with PPS and don't tear down possible venues like Lincoln High School etc. just yet. I donate monies for those who are in need.....Hungry and homeless so I know where my heart is.....but I would think with more thought, partnership, courageous ingenuity, many homeless shelters can be developed ( think Jordan Schnitzer and Wapato jail) The answer is not a quick fix of allowing camping in our city parks. THEY ARE NOT CAMPGROUNDS. Do we not want tourism in our city???? Do we not want to rebuild the seemingly destroyed beautiful Portland "city of roses" brand? I understand being homeless is not illegal, but please, please save our parks and continue to protect them from becoming the current solution to our homelessness. The existing policy cannot be changed. Laws need to be enforced. The proposal needs to be tossed. Thank you Sheila

Testimony is presented without formatting.