

# Rick Sany

**#278953 | March 24, 2021**

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

Dear Mayor Wheeler and Members of Portland City Council: I support the City in finding workable and humane solutions for dealing with houselessness. I would like the city to remove the recommendation to use open spaces, which would include parks, natural areas, trails, golf courses, parks-related parking lots and community centers, as temporary shelter spaces, except in the case of natural disasters and short term emergencies. The use of these spaces and facilities should not be allowed during a Shelter Shortage as defined in the proposed code. These spaces are meant for recreational, not residential use. Most of us Portlanders voted for significant tax measures to support both houseless services and parks. We need to honor that intent and ensure the ability for all to use our parks for their intended purposes. The use of these spaces would be a band-aid at best, and is not a good solution to our current houselessness challenges. I also ask that you remove Portland Parks & Recreation community centers and other recreation buildings from consideration for use as temporary shelters related to the Shelter Shortage. I support the use of community centers in times of natural disasters and weather emergencies. The use of community centers during a pandemic fit this criteria because Covid is a short-term natural disaster and the community centers are closed—not functioning as intended. Once the pandemic emergency is over, we should all expect our community centers to return to their primary purpose. By recommending that community centers should be available to provide shelter during a Shelter Shortage, you are suggesting that their highest and best use should be as homeless shelters rather than recreation centers for the entire community. By recommending that community center or park parking lots should be available for managed homeless camps or inhabited vehicles, you are saying that this use trumps general community access to our parks and recreation centers. I strongly reject both of those arguments. The City should investigate the experiences of other cities that have used parks as homeless shelters.

Testimony is presented without formatting.