

Helen Pihlstrom

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

I don't think our public parks and natural areas are the right places for homeless shelters. We aren't talking about underused buildings or lots here - these are well-used, well-loved natural spaces that were previously set aside for the whole public to enjoy. I visit my local Portland City Park several times a week. I bring my toddler and my elderly mom. I've donated my labor to maintain trails. Countless other neighbors use it and enjoy it similarly. The delicate ecosystem of the park is reflected in the care that users take to keep it clean, safe, and inviting. If there were people living, sleeping, cooking, and keeping all of their belongings inside the parks, that would fundamentally change these spaces, at the expense of the many, many more people who'd like to use the park. I also wonder how temporary the shelters and camping might turn out to be - given that houselessness is not a temporary problem. Instead of giving up our parks, let's utilize more appropriate public buildings, lots, etc.

Testimony is presented without formatting.