

Ethan Seltzer

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

I am writing to ask that you not allow parks and natural areas to be used for "temporary" housing in the Shelter-to-Housing continuum. Portland needs a Shelter-to-Housing continuum but it shouldn't run through the most vulnerable and publicly used locations in the city. The pandemic has proven that Portland needs its parks, trails, and natural areas. These areas are used and appreciated by many city dwellers. Using them for housing, temporary or otherwise, is no different than giving them over to nonpublic uses, something we'd never seek or allow, particularly when there are plenty of other available alternatives. Further, these park, natural area, and trail lands have received significant and ongoing public investment to present them to the public for a range of passive and active recreational uses. The true cost of using these lands for housing far exceeds the cost associated with placing housing there. Finally, no use for housing should be made of parking or other hardsurface areas associated with parks, natural areas, or trails unless and until the Bureau of Parks is provided with the funds needed to cope with the "halo" of camping that has occurred around every sanctioned camp in the city. Simply put, camping attracts camping, and there is ample evidence of this in Portland today and of the complete lack of attention to this dynamic on the part of the City and the Joint Office. To ignore the likely consequences on adjacent park areas of locating housing and attendant services in parking areas, with the unreasonable expectation that placing housing on hard surfaces will leave no trace, is both short-sighted and further reason to doubt the sincerity of Portland and its partners with respect to moving people off of the streets and into safe, served, and humane permanent housing. Make no mistake, I write these comments because I want the Shelter-to-Housing continuum and all other efforts to move beyond the current crisis of houseless camping in Portland to succeed. It must succeed. However, utilizing lands already subject to some of the most profound impacts is a losing hand. BPS analysis has proven that you don't need parks, natural areas, and trails to succeed. Please make it unambiguously clear that you also don't believe that they're needed, and that you're anticipating the spillover effects long associated with designated camps. Thanks for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony is presented without formatting.