

# Thomas Spaulding

**#279021 | March 25, 2021**

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

March 25, 2021 WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THOMAS SPAULDING AND DEBRA BURKE REQUESTING THE CITY TO REMOVE THE RECOMMENDATION TO USE OPEN SPACES AS TEMPORARY SHELTER SPACES Dear Council Members: We are submitting our written testimony urging the City Council to remove from the Shelter to Housing Continuum any recommendation to use open spaces as temporary shelter spaces. We further request that the governing documents expressly prohibit using open spaces including parks, natural areas, trails, golf courses, and parks-related parking lots and community centers, as temporary shelter spaces, except in the case of natural disasters and short-term emergencies. The recommendation to use open spaces, however well-intended now, represents the proverbial camel's nose under the tent. If adopted, this proposal carries the risk of much more serious consequences emerging. Specifically, we fear that tent cities, mountains of trash, crime, discarded drug paraphernalia, and the like, will permeate the City's open spaces, if this wrong-headed proposal gains traction. Ten years ago, or even five, we would have said such dire predictions were overblown, if not ridiculous. However, the problem now, is quite literally out of control. For many years, we owned a duplex on NE Multnomah and 83rd, where the I-84 off-ramp leads exiting traffic toward NE 82 Street. As the homelessness crisis grew, a small tent city emerged next to the off-ramp. We were not unsympathetic to the people living there, and let campers use the duplex water spigot. However, the longer this went on, we received increasing tenant reports of persons urinating and defecating alongside the duplex, of finding discarded syringes on the property, of personal items being stolen. Regrettably, we had to remove the water spigot. As Mayor Wheeler has remarked, homelessness is a national problem which requires a national solution. While we support efforts to find solutions, we believe that the current problem, is simply insoluble. Thus, the proper approach should be to contain the problem, not provide an opening for its dispersal. The proposal to use open spaces as temporary shelter spaces is precisely the wrong approach. Once a foothold is obtained in these open spaces, mountains of waste, drug use and crime are sure to follow. Promises that such camps will be "managed," seem aspirational at best. No doubt similar sentiments were expressed when the Springwater Corridor or the I-205 bike paths first became overrun. Today, these jewels of Portland's bike culture are unusable and unsafe because the runaway problem has overcome the abilities of officials to manage these public assets. We fear the same thing happening to our precious parks and public spaces if this door is opened. For these reasons we urge you to prohibit public spaces from being used as temporary shelter spaces.

Testimony is presented without formatting.