

Deborah Lev

#279106 | March 25, 2021

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

I join the many former park officials supporting the plan to provide options for responding to the needs of our houseless neighbors AND expressing my concern about allowing temporary shelters in open space zones. After listening to the Council hearings on March 17 and March 24, I refreshed my memory on the purpose of the open space designation: The Open Space zone is intended to preserve and enhance public and private open, natural, and improved park and recreational areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan. These areas serve many functions including: • Providing opportunities for outdoor recreation; • Providing contrasts to the built environment; • Preserving scenic qualities; • Protecting sensitive or fragile environmental areas; • Enhancing and protecting the values and functions of trees and the urban forest; • Preserving the capacity and water quality of the stormwater drainage system; and • Providing pedestrian and bicycle transportation connections. Housing infrastructure, including temporary shelter, is not compatible with the intentions and functions of open spaces in our City. There may indeed be, as was reported, OS-zoned parcels of land that would be appropriate for temporary or permanent shelters. If these parcels do not and cannot provide the benefits of open space, perhaps their zoning is incorrect. These parcels could be inventoried and called out for possible consideration. I certainly believe that there is no current intent by the drafters of the proposed policy to site shelters in parks; these intentions need to be codified. Unfortunately, parks are visible and as shared public spaces will get tapped to fulfill any number of non-open space functions when this door is opened. I like what I've seen of the self-managed housing alternative sites around town. I would welcome one or more of these sites in my neighborhood and would chip in time and resources to see it succeed. If it functions well, such a community should be allowed to continue beyond the temporary shelter timelines. Such long-term use would not be appropriate for any park or future park site. Yes, there are times when it may be appropriate to use a park, park parking lot or building for other emergency use such as a temporary staging area after a large storm event or for shelter in cold weather or pandemic. These uses should be restricted to limited duration weather events and natural disasters, not for an ongoing situation such as our shelter shortage. PP&R has demonstrated the ability and willingness to accommodate these uses to respond to City needs through existing policies. The protection of open space zones does not need to be widely opened to allow for these occasional uses. Thank you for your work on addressing the difficult problems we face together.

Testimony is presented without formatting.