

Verner Wolf

#279120 | March 26, 2021

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

Dear Mayor Wheeler et. al.: 1. We support the effort to find solutions to the houseless crisis but it is unfair for the east side to bear the brunt of the responsibility. Obviously many people are homeless due to circumstances beyond their control and deserve help. There are some who are criminals and very bad people. Some have severe mental illness. Many people, including myself, are very concerned about safety and sanitation. I see nothing in the proposal that guarantees safety for the people neighboring the different shelters. There should be a guarantee of police presence and other safety measures before a shelter becomes operative. I will leave it to others too determine the best approach, but safety must be guaranteed to the neighborhoods that the shelters will exist in. Just an idea, but could there be a shelter category for people who will voluntarily undergo drug and alcohol testing on a periodic and random basis. In addition people with certain criminal backgrounds should be excluded from this shelter category. This might be say, an A+ rating and the neighbors would feel secure that the people living there are probably not going to pose a safety risk for them. The areas used for shelters should have adequate lighting and cameras. It is not much to ask to be able to monitor these locations to prevent criminal activity. I think it's a mistake to allow any areas to be used for tents and camping without sufficient infrastructure present including showers and toilets. If parking lots and parks are going to be used on a temporary basis temporary lighting needs to be provided at all times. Lighting and preferably cameras. We should do background checks on people who we shelter. If someone appears to be seriously mentally ill, they should be encouraged to see a physician about medication and management of their illness. People with violent criminal backgrounds need to be separated from those who are not violent. People with substance abuse problems should not be enabled. They must agree to treatment has a condition for assistance. Homeless people who do not have a violent criminal background and homeless because the cost of housing, being laid off, etc. should be given opportunities to work. I have seen library bathrooms used for drugs and it got so bad that they kept the bathroom doors open to monitor the stalls etc. People would pass out in the bathroom, have meetings engage in transactions, etc. People would fall asleep in the library at the tables only to be woken up by library staff and then quickly fall asleep again. Eventually I suppose they were asked to leave but it is very difficult to evict somebody who only wants to get some sleep. So a place needs to be found for homeless people to spend their time during the day time hours. 2. We ask that the city remove the recommendation to use open spaces, which would include 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 use of these spaces should not be allowed during a Shelter Shortage as defined in the proposed code. There are safety issues to be considered with this recommendation - used needles for adults and children to find, litter, feces, etc. There are very few places for homeless people to go now with forced closure of libraries due to the pandemic. 3. Rethink assumptions related to siting temporary shelters. Shelters should be sited so that they can remain in place if they are successful. 4. Remove consideration of community centers and their parking lots from consideration for use as temporary shelters related to the Shelter Shortage. Once the pandemic is over, all community centers should return to their primary purpose. 5. The City should investigate the experiences of other cities that have sited homeless shelters in parks. This should be done prior to any permanent code changes, and the best solutions should be published and perhaps voted on by the citizens. Kind Regards, Verner Wolf 11150 NE Schuyler Street Portland, OR 97220

Testimony is presented without formatting.