

Anna Abraham

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

Here's what's on my mind! PORTLAND - To be or not to be?! My view: One of the major challenges is the homeless population is diverse and the solutions are just as diverse. The ability to deal with hard core drug addicts who want zero to do with rehabilitation programs and shelters who regulate them (unless they can manipulate the system to support their drug habits) requires a specific strategy. On the opposite end of the spectrum are non-drug addicts ... those who have lost their homes or jobs and ended up in their cars trying to keep their jobs or find a job requires a very different strategy. The mentally ill cannot humanely be left on the streets to fend for themselves. Then there are all the variations in between. They cannot be lumped together no more than they can be housed together. So providing housing and human services for these diverse groups while preserving their rights is a complex challenge. These challenges have to be met without sacrificing the rest of society's rights. All this will continue unless we solve the core issues such as escalating housing costs, be it purchasing an over inflated house and rents that eliminate the middle class and create more homelessness and drive young people and seniors out of the city. Unfair taxes that force seniors and others out of the city can be solved if the will is there. A moratorium on taxes for seniors after retirement age would be a good start, as well as rent control for a percentage of the population. This requires a commitment and a level of strategic planning that has not happened. The city failed to learn from other cities who lost their livability. Crime flourishes in a city that has lost it's middle class, where the wealthy live behind gates and the poor and down and out roam the streets with no food, no home and no hope... crime will reign! Nor can you engage in racism, sexism and the rest of the ism's and create a fair, just and thriving society. You cannot maintain a civilized society by tolerating lawlessness. The police should never be allowed to police themselves. But we need police. The police should have never been put in a position to manage the homeless or chronically mentally ill. They didn't create the problem ...they inherited it ... a problem they were never trained to deal with. They were set up to fail. Reform yes. But don't make them the scapegoats. The rights of law abiding citizens cannot be sacrificed to deal with these problems and it doesn't need to happen that way. Yes we are in a state of crisis ... a state of emergency that wasn't created by the epidemic. No money you say for sanitation, housing etc. I say you are going to pay it one way or the other economically, socially and spiritually. Spend the money for Honey Buckets, showers, small homes, trash removal etc. If you want people to continue to want to live here, for tourists to continue to want to come here these things you must do. The destruction of the city in the name of anything should have zero tolerance. The price of the alternative is way higher... as is witnessed in the major

cities who failed to create an enlightened society. They failed to preserve the character and humanity of the city in the name of blind progress that benefited the few instead of the people they were elected to serve. The city needs a long term vision plan. If it exists I am requesting a copy. If it doesn't the city needs a visions committee like I launched in Old Town when Vera Katz was a mayor. I'm hopeful with the new commissioners and Sam Adams on board we will have more enlightened leadership. Respectfully Anna Abraham

Testimony is presented without formatting.