

# Katherine Showalter

**#279200 | March 29, 2021**

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

Mayor and Commissioners: I watched the testimony on this legislation with great interest, and was impressed by the speaker who described Minneapolis's failed experiment with sanctioned park camping. (Portland emphasizes the distinction between regulated and unregulated camping, but I frankly don't believe the city would be able to keep things under control.) What she didn't mention was that it was triggered by the eviction of hundreds of people from an abandoned hotel. It would have made far more sense to seize the hotel under the law of eminent domain and rehab it as subsidized public housing than to put the burden on other public services, inflaming tensions among housed and unhoused residents, the city and the police. Like Minneapolis, Portland has enacted policies fueling speculative building, raising the cost of housing and leaving us with huge, half-empty apartment buildings. This is an emergency, as Council says. Why not use eminent domain to take over existing abandoned and neglected buildings and explore emergency legislation requiring corporate property owners to rent empty apartments to the city at a low rate? Members of the houseless population could help to identify predators and those with serious mental health problems who would need separate, specialized accommodation. I realize that it's easier to enrage powerless residents who want the use of city parks and protection of natural areas than it is to enrage powerful property investors, but I believe it is the just way to go about giving people shelter, basic facilities for living and the dignity of having a decent home. And let's call SRO's what they are – tenements for the poor. The city must stop using zoning code changes as a simple fix for social ills.

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Testimony is presented without formatting.