

# Peggy Thatcher Aguilu

**#279203 | March 29, 2021**

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

I appreciate the city looking at all options to develop and implement a plan to deal with the houseless/homeless disaster now occurring in Portland. I have lived and am a homeowner in Portland for almost 30 years. I was a small business owner/manager for almost 20 years, and am currently active in a number of community non-profit entities. For the records, I was raised from a destitute family with an alcoholic father; we experienced ongoing homelessness and moved all the time, attended a myriad of schools, lack of food. Eventually my Mom taking 5 children with her, walked away and in a few short years got her GED, job training, and we moved from housing projects to a home of our own. So in many regards, I can well-understand many different perspectives on home homeless/houseless issues. Portland needs to take strong leadership and action on this issue. To continue the trends of the last few years leaves the city as it stands today. Covered in graffiti, filth, hundreds of needles located in many areas of the city, boarded up buildings, and homeless campsites from our "treasured" walking/biking trails, behind buildings, bridge under and overpasses, city sidewalks and parking strips, city parks; literally everywhere. I worked during 2020 on identifying many of these camps and have had discussions with a good number of these campsite dwellers. Some need mental health help and/or should not be without assisted living, many others need help and support (even as simple as phone being charged), others want to stay as they are "traveling through" and need sanitary facilities and food. Each of those demand different solutions. We need more options for where to put people. However, I am totally opposed to the idea of utilizing the City of Portland's Parks, recreation areas or there associated parking lots. From what I am hearing in our communities; businesses and homeowners alike are looking at the very real "do I want to stay in Portland". The reality is that property taxes and business taxes support the services we provide as a city. At the same time, businesses and homeowners would agree that we as a city need to address this issue. As a community, I believe we do care about people in a homeless/houseless situation. But there needs to be an aggressive solution on all fronts with this issue. The tiny house or contained areas for the home "pads" seems to be working best. MY SUGGESTION: 1. Create these areas with enough room for differing groups of people (mentally ill, those needing help with jobs, housing etc, or those "traveling thru") with services located on site. 2. Possible locations: do not put on top of park or recreation sites,. Utilize the areas that have the space and are close to transit or freeway. Examples: empty k-mart bldg on NE 122nd, old car race area by Portland Expo, industrial areas close to Columbia Hwy etc... 3. Include a continuum of service model, with all individuals within a database for tracking progress with goals. 4. Create a system to

"support" these camps and city clean-up that homeless individuals can work in a current time of "Civilian Corps" for which they are paid. 5. Homeless camping not allowed anywhere but in these and existing supportive homeless/houseless camps. Anyone, who abuses this rule would have their stuff moved within 24 hours. 6. All trash picked up, trash cans available (yes, chained up or anchoring situation), more sanitary stations with hand-washing available. 7. The police should not need to be the first point of contact for these folks. A better match is the people with the experience and know-how to deal with these folks. It may seem like a "bad guy" model. However, the current lax rules and follow up are worse. All of the above has probably been identified. My point is to set a policy where we don't ruin our parks and recreation areas (which has destroyed parts of the Springwater Trail which was a visionary project years ago). Hold everyone accountable with set rules and regulations. Involve those that are served -- having a job gives people a sense of taking care of themselves and involvement in their community. I believe strong, deliberate action is needed; without it we would continue to be on the downward spiral as we currently are.

Testimony is presented without formatting.