

J R Merrick

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

Dear Mayor and Commissioners, The S2H proposal as written is a feel good but not supportable. Yes, it is common sense to support “managed” campsites and permanent shelter that provides sanitary facilities and social services as a step toward ending ad hoc camping. It is a relief that City Council gave assurances to exclude parks including golf courses and most open space. However, hedging questions such as using adjacent parking areas, failing to specify how these camps will be located, and exempting extended emergencies such assurances leave many uneasy. Consider also that ad hoc occupancy would be effectively sanctioned by proposed HB 3115 making exclusions unenforceable. Revising the zoning code to insure a "housing continuum", i.e. allowing for more options where people may sleep is not an advance in addressing the problems of unemployment, mental health, addiction, criminal behavior, and the shortage of sanctioned and managed housing for those who are struggling to get back on their feet. Rather, it establishes additional classes of housing and further unwinds the quality of life expectations for all Portlanders and visitors to the city. Approval of the "housing continuum" makes permanent entitlements for "temporary" occupancy without clear sunset provisions. The code will normalize “managed” campsites in sanctioned locations and will entitle unmanaged housing in tents, tiny houses, and camper vehicles in other locations. Without the existing conditional use permit process, neighbors will have no say in where sanctioned sites are located and little recourse where these entitlements are abused. The issue of homelessness is both tragic and complex. The City and County and their Joint Task Force along with concerned citizen volunteers and numerous social service agencies that serve the homeless/houseless population have struggled for years to address the problems - including providing managed camping with sanitary facilities. And yet, the evidence of societal breakdown is ever more conspicuous in every neighborhood. The proposal fails to address any of the underlying problems. Mapping the city for distributed campsites in the name of equity ignores the main justification used to oppose opening Wapato as a shelter and appears to ignore City and County owned land in industrial use that could be used for managed campsites. Without many qualifying conditions, the “shelter to housing project” only guarantees that there will be increasing friction between impacted residents and their homeless neighbors and an ongoing breakdown of trust between Portland residents and their elected and appointed officials. Please carefully consider the long term implications: Are there constraints on who will be housed in “managed” camps? Who will be on site to manage the camps and enforce limitation on the unmanaged sites? How permanent will camps be and who will be deprived of the use of space? And not least, what are the financial

implications and obligations for "management" and enforcement? Until these considerations are fully addressed, I respectfully request that S2HP receive a no vote. In its present form, your opposition to this radical proposal is appreciated. Rod Merrick AIA, Representing my own thoughts.
President ENA Board of Directors

Testimony is presented without formatting.