

My name is Henry Kraemer and I am a homeowner and small landlord living in northeast Portland. I am strongly in favor of the Shelter to Housing Continuum, although I believe it would be greatly improved by adopting the amendments proposed by Portland: Neighbors Welcome regarding shelters on faith-based and community-based institutional properties and RV/Tiny Houses on Wheels (THOW) on residential properties.

First, it simply makes sense to allow faith-based and community-based organizations to host shelters by-right without conditional use review. Portland is mired in a devastating housing and homelessness crisis, and we need to urgently embrace any organization offering to help. If churches, synagogues, mosques, and nonprofits are willing to provide shelter, the city should not require them to wait months or years and pay tens of thousands of dollars to do so. By waiving conditional use review for these pillars of the community to host shelters, the city will get more people off the street faster, and strengthen our chances of truly solving the crisis.

Second, the city should do everything possible to avoid displacing anybody currently living in an RV or THOW on a residential property. I strongly support the city's now-longstanding policy of allowing these small homes to share residential property. I have made use of this policy myself, hosting a Tiny House on Wheels in my backyard for nearly two years. I am glad to see the Shelter to Housing Continuum draft permanently legalize these arrangements but I worry about the restrictionist requirements in the current proposal and their potential to displace RV & THOW tenants.

The City's current policies toward RVs and THOWs on residential property – as listed on the Bureau of Development Services website – manage to provide fair standards while preserving flexibility for diverse budgets and contexts. Their electricity guidelines prioritize safety and their sanitation directives ensure good hygiene, while neither require THOW tenants or hosts to break the bank.

Unfortunately, the current draft proposal – requiring a classic RV hookup and sewer line for any RV or THOW – opts for a one-size-fits-all approach that costs many thousands of dollars and will prove prohibitively expensive in many cases. If the draft passes without the Portland: Neighbors Welcome amendments, my tenants and I will need to completely overhaul our property and one or both of us will need to take on significant new debt. This would be a tremendous burden. While I would attempt to shoulder it, I am a pro-housing activist who actively organizes to prevent displacement. I am duty-bound to try to make it work, despite the likelihood that doing so would put me in financial peril.

It is a safe assumption that many current hosts of RVs and THOWs (most of whom are not duty-bound pro-housing activists) would balk at taking on these significant costs and risks and simply discontinue the arrangement, leading to the avoidable displacement of many people. The foreseeable result of this would be more RVs in the right-of-way, with less stability for these newly homeless people, and worse sanitation and safety for the entire community.

The city can easily avoid this situation by rejecting the restrictionist language in the current proposal and adopting the current RV/THOW policies practiced by BDS into city code. At very least, City Council should ensure that safe alternative electric and sanitation solutions are permanently permissible without added costs to the tenant or host.

To recap, please pass the Shelter to Housing Continuum with the amendments proposed by Portland: Neighbors Welcome regarding shelters on faith-based and community-based institutional properties and RV/Tiny Houses on Wheels on residential properties. Thank you very much for your consideration.