

**From:** [Virginia Ehelebe](#)  
**To:** [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** Written Testimony on Resolutions 899-903  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 25, 2022 2:47:16 PM

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Mayor Wheeler and City Commissioners,

I support the policy vision behind this package of proposals. The priority attached to ending unsanctioned camping is appropriate, and it makes sense to pair this policy shift with accelerated production of affordable housing and the provision of more robust mental health and navigation services.

That said, I am concerned by the role outdated population and housing price assumptions played in shaping the goals contained in Resolution 899.

— The expectation our city will need an additional 295,000 housing units by 2040, for example, assumes Portland will attract more new residents annually in coming decades than it did in the 1990s. But our city’s declining livability, coupled with our country’s waning population growth rate, make a new 1990s-style population boom implausible. Indeed, the Census Bureau estimates Portland’s population fell by 1.7 percent between April 2020 and July 2021.

—The assumption that Portland’s “housing will continue to become more unaffordable” also is debatable. This week’s Economist magazine argues forcefully that the global housing price boom is over, and contends “the ingredients for a deep housing slump are in place”.

**These arguably flawed assumptions create the impression the affordable housing plan**, like many other recent city initiatives, **is overly ambitious—a notion reinforced by the \$9.8 billion estimate given** for building 20,000 affordable housing units. I fear that impression may spur more residents and businesses to ponder leaving the city. To minimize that risk and demonstrate the sense of urgency residents expect, **I urge the Council to:**

— **Rework Resolution 899**, by making the case for fast-tracking affordable housing construction without specifying—for now—targets for overall or affordable housing units. Even if political realities make a delay in specifying targets a nonstarter, I hope city leaders will ask city planners to take another, more data-driven look at the city’s future housing requirements. Given the uncertainties surrounding Portland’s prospects and housing prices, a scenarios-based approach appears merited.

— **Supplement this package of proposals with near term measures to alter the unsanctioned camping status quo**—by, for example, allowing tents on sidewalks only between sunset and sunrise or by limiting the size of tents permitted on sidewalks during daylight hours. Obviously, the city would need to provide facilities for the safe storage of items to make such limits to be viable.

Respectfully,  
Virginia Ehelebe