

HOMES



PROPOSAL

Councilmember O'Brien and Councilmember Harris-Talley announced their proposal for a series of investments to be made this fall focusing on the factors which will help to alleviate **Seattle's homelessness crisis** – namely, places for people to live in the short- and long-term. As the Mayor's budget stated:



"With better shelter and authorized encampment options in hand, the Navigation Team outreach effort is seeing improved acceptance rates from people living unsheltered."

- Mayor Tim Burgess (September 25, 2017)

*"Despite the economic prosperity driving growth in the City's revenues, **and in part because of it**, Seattle is facing a homelessness crisis of unprecedented proportions."*

- Executive Summary from the Mayor's Proposed Budget

Problem

Without more places for people to go, we will continue providing services and outreach to nowhere, exacerbating our homelessness crisis. Unless people have more places to go, it is a system set up to fail.

The 2018 Proposed Budget from the Mayor provides ongoing funding for these efforts, but does not provide additional funding for more accessible and 24-hour shelters. There is also currently no plan for additional permanent housing beyond current investments.

True "pathways home" means providing a place to stay, both immediately and long-term, that people will choose to go to. Due to both lack of shelter space and lack of housing, the City's Pathways Home program squeezes social service providers to do the impossible: go from 4% exit to housing to 40%, to make room for more people coming off the streets.

The Need

These small but important changes could make all the difference for thousands living on our streets:

#1 – Increase number of mass-entry, 24 hour shelters

to help stabilize people, get their needs met and come in from the outdoors while we wait for housing to become available.

- \$6 million/year for low-barrier shelters and services, which could encompass:
 - More than 300 new shelter beds per year
 - Vehicle safe zones
 - Expansion of the Law Enforcement Assistance Diversion (LEAD) program citywide

#2 – More permanent housing

- \$18 million/year to invest in permanent affordable housing units across the city and rental assistance support.

Together, these comprehensive changes are known as the Housing Outreach Mass-Entry Shelter (H.O.M.E.S.) proposal.

Proposed Solutions

We can't ignore the displacement caused by growth in Seattle, and our city can't dig our way out of a hole – and state law limits our options to raise revenue. Councilmember O'Brien's approach invites **businesses who have enjoyed unprecedented profit from what Seattle has to offer help contribute to relieve the pressures** our economic growth is creating.

- The Employees Hours Tax (commonly known as the “head tax”) was repealed in 2009 due to the recession.
- \$24 million = \$100/employee/year = 5.2 cents per hour

This proposal affects only the top 10% of businesses (approx. 2,200) in Seattle whose gross receipts value at least \$5 million per year. They would pay only an additional \$0.05 an hour per employee.

Not everyone in our city has benefited from the booming economy. Our highest-grossing businesses can help to solve a crisis that is in part due to the rising rents that our economic boom has created.

Timeline

We are proposing this during our budget process (Nov 2017) with an effective date in early 2019. Half of the anticipated revenue would be spent in 2018 via a loan from future 2019 revenue.

Contact

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