

## **Statement of Principles and Recommended Approaches Proposed by Bagshaw and Service Providers**

**March 2, 2016**

No person should suffer unnecessarily or be subject to unfair discrimination or arbitrary treatment based on housing status. It is the intent of these principles to lessen the adverse effects and conditions caused by the lack of a home or residence and to establish safe, and stable interim housing. Finding housing for homeless individuals should be the City of Seattle's top public health priority.

### **1. Create Emergency Response Team separate from Permanent Solutions Team**

- The Emergency Response Team will coordinate with the private sector and others outside city government while aligning with the Human Services Department and the Office of Emergency Management efforts;
- The Emergency Response Team will focus on the need for short-term housing, and be separate from Human Services Department's long-term efforts to end homelessness;
- The Emergency Response Team will coordinate with engaged partners including but not limited to All Home member organizations, Portfolio partners, County Executive, mental health leaders, and the Board of Health to get people inside;
- We recommend that the Mayor identify an Emergency Response Czar. Assign this emergency response leader for the next six months with high priority on finding/building/creating innovative 24/7 housing options within the private sector, faith, labor and non-government organizations.

### **2. Set a short term goal to create dry 24-hour spaces for an additional 1000 people**

Housing is by far the most important component of what it will take to get people off the streets.

Options include but are not limited to:

- Expanding existing shelters to 24-hour shelters with lockers;
- Modularity that can be built and put in place quickly;
- Fast-track permits for indoor rooming houses and SRO's;
- Fast-track Tiny House options across the City and County designing creative management models;
- Allow encampments inside buildings using tents;

- Build “National Guard” - type emergency response with bunks or beds/cots, bathrooms, or temporary carrels with partial walls and doors inside a dry space, and including showers and washing machines;
- Provide indoor warming spaces for emergency nighttime needs, especially for families with children.

To achieve our housing goals we should consider:

- Re-examining fire safety requirements to assure safety while reducing costs;
- Expanding the landlord liaison program;
- Providing lockers at other public facilities including police stations;
- Working with labor unions, apprenticeship programs, and interested organizations to build community-supported spaces like carrels or tiny houses for people within buildings.

**3. Renew emphasis on professional outreach and sustained engagement with people who are on the streets.**

- The professional service providers face real and urgent capacity concerns due to increased demand. To provide adequate services we need to hire and pay qualified workers;
- Develop coordinated approaches with service providers;
- Outreach efforts should build trust and determine how an individual’s housing needs can be met on a voluntary basis;
- Building trust takes time; simultaneously, the broader community must acknowledge that people may not break criminal laws nor be allowed to create public health problems from garbage, needles or human waste;
- Help from the state and feds will be required to scale up services for those with addictions and mental health issues.

**4. Youth and Young Adult emphasis needed**

- Target strategies and investments to prevent children from living outside and provide more programmed options. Base investment decisions on outcomes and measurements;
- Engage young people where they are through low-barrier employment and education opportunities;
- Extend reach across state and local systems to find appropriate housing options for youth.

5. Acknowledge the difference between violent crimes and property crimes v. camping or other survival efforts. Take neighborhoods' concerns about public safety seriously and make arrests for stealing, break-ins and other property crimes
  - Neighbors, service providers, and elected officials alike want the police to hold people accountable who are breaking the law;
  - Enforcement priorities should be violent crimes and property offenses that victimize other people rather than citing homeless people for actions incurred as a function of being homeless;
  - Putting people in jail for non-violent crimes is not in itself a long-term strategy that will result in behavioral change;
  - Support LEAD program principles and coordinate with Community Courts for people-centered options.
  
6. "Sweeps"
  - Removing people and taking their belongings without offering them another safe alternative is counter-productive and inhumane;
  - Destruction of un-contaminated property should not occur unless there are adequate housing or shelter options available and viable means to safeguard property;
  - Taking people's belongings is the absolute last resort and must not be done until all other reasonable efforts have been tried;
  - The health and safety concerns for individuals and neighborhoods must be top priority;
  - Keep in mind a common harm reduction phrase, "**better is better**," offering people through outreach better options than may seem apparent to them. Don't let "perfect get in the way of good enough";
  - A large percentage of people living outside have mental illnesses or addiction problems and should be approached through a harm-reduction approach;
  - The community is best served by reframing how we approach engagement with people living outdoors from being a public safety problem to being a community-wide public health issue;
  - Adequate notice must include information about how to avoid property destruction and what 24/7 housing options may be available;
  - Housing options may be offered but not coerced; if individuals refuse options and services, individuals may be required to leave unhealthy or unsafe sites;
  - Offer transportation to new locations when people are being moved to a new site;

- Address neighborhood concerns for public safety with individual needs and problems. No one will be allowed to ignore criminal laws;
  - If we have housing to offer, social workers and police must work together to decide on best approach for each individual.
7. **Where temporary, safe housing options are unavailable, add and maintain dumpsters, needle disposal containers and Sani-Cans at designated locations within the city and across the county**
- If adequate housing options are not available to meet people's needs, and there is not an immediate safety emergency provide garbage cans and Sani-Cans on-sight;
  - This is a stop-gap measure, focusing on public health to keep neighborhoods cleaner and make the city safer on a temporary basis.
8. **Long Term Recovery: Short-term housing needs must be tied with HALA plans to create more temporary and permanent housing for those who are homeless and emphasize rapid rehousing.**
- Address homelessness through expanded access to permanent affordable housing;
  - Keep people in their homes when possible;
  - Assure "Whole City" approach and entire continuum of care.
9. **Amend state and local legislation to reduce barriers to housing based upon income sources, criminal records, and eviction records; make access to housing easier, and promote programs earmarking housing for prison re-entry and other needed programs. Consider the following:**
- Designate spaces and streamline procedures for people with criminal history or eviction records;
  - Work with courts to reduce/remove judicial costs when tenant is engaged in positive programs;
  - Assure that source of income does not bar a tenant from a unit;
  - Create centralized place for references checks or credit ratings;
  - Enhance the Landlord Liaison programs through RHA and other organizations to access permanent housing, sign leases and move into otherwise vacant units;
  - Participating landlords will receive rapid response to concerns, access to a 24-hour call-in line and risk reduction funds agree to apply alternative screening criteria to applicants and in.

**10. Support legislative efforts to remove barriers to obtain housing; work with state and federal government to obtain more supportive funding**

- Coordinate legislative strategies to make Medicaid and other sources of funding available to provide services;
- Build more treatment centers for those with addictions and mental health issues;
- Develop strategic plans with community organizations to coordinate spaces and services and outcomes for addictions and mental health issues.

**11. Continue to encourage organized and managed encampments and safe parking lots**

- Organized encampments are safe and healthy alternatives for many and should be encouraged as temporary spaces while awaiting permanent housing;
- RV safe parking lots provide alternative spaces for people whose vehicles also serve as their homes;
- Rules and regulations promoting public safety should be applied appropriately in each location, including some designated low barrier sites.

