



## **Ad Hoc Committee on Housing Affordability**

### **Consideration of the Responses of Other Communities that Have Engaged in Coordinated Efforts to Address Housing Affordability and Homelessness**

**Agenda Date:** 4/19/2017  
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#### **Title**

Consideration of the Responses of Other Communities that Have Engaged in Coordinated Efforts to Address Housing Affordability and Homelessness

#### **Recommended Action**

##### **Committee Recommendation:**

Not referred to a committee

##### **City Manager Recommendation:**

Provide feedback and direction on ongoing efforts to develop a meaningful response to housing affordability and homelessness issues.

#### **Report**

##### **Issue:**

Whether to discuss the work of other communities such as Bellingham, Vancouver, Everett, or Seattle that have engaged in coordinated efforts to address housing affordability and homelessness.

##### **Staff Contact:**

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##### **Presenter(s):**

Keith Stahley, Director Community Planning and Development Department  
Mike McCormick Home Fund

##### **Background and Analysis:**

On March 29, 2017, the Home Fund held a forum on housing. The forum featured speakers from Bellingham and Vancouver Washington. Both of these communities passed housing levies in the past five years. A copy of the notes from that forum is attached.

##### **Bellingham Summary:**

In 2012, Bellingham voters approved a property tax levy of \$21 million over a 7-year period (2013-

2019) to provide, produce, and/or preserve affordable housing. Two-thirds of the funding must benefit those households earning less than 50 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). Additional information about Bellingham's Home Fund can be found in the attachments linked below.

The City of Bellingham's levy was approved for inclusion on the 2012 ballot in January of 2012 and passed in November of 2012.

In addition to the Home Fund, Bellingham has a rental registration and inspection program.

### **Vancouver Summary:**

In January 2016, following eight months of discussion by the City of Vancouver's Affordable Housing Task Force, City Council reviewed several recommendations to address Vancouver's lack of affordable housing options. Creating a locally controlled affordable housing fund was identified as the first high priority option to move forward in 2016.

After exploring potential revenue sources for an affordable housing fund, a property tax levy was identified as the most practical and timely option. The State of Washington allows cities to enact a property tax levy for affordable housing if such a measure is approved by a majority of voters (RCW 84.52.105). Funds raised must serve very low-income households in Vancouver, defined as earning up to 50 percent of the area median income ("AMI").

Vancouver's proposed levy would raise \$42 million over seven years (\$6 million per year) for affordable housing and services available to very low-income residents. This Administrative and Financial Plan ("Plan") lays out objectives for the Vancouver Affordable Housing Fund and describes how funds would be managed and spent if approved by voters.

Vancouver's initiative began to take shape in May of 2015, was voted on for inclusion on the ballot in January 2016 and passed in November 2016. Vancouver's property tax went into effect on January 1, 2017 and affordable housing fund awards will begin being spent on projects in 2018.

As noted in the Olympia Housing Forum Notes, included as an attachment, Vancouver adopted regulations providing limited controls on the timing of rent increases, beyond 10 percent, on no cause evictions and on source of payment for low income housing. Vancouver also declared an emergency in accordance with RCW 84.52.105 (included as an attachment) and prepared an affordable housing finance plan as required by the plan (attached).

Additional information about Vancouver's Home Fund can be found in the attachments linked below.

### **Seattle Summary:**

On August 2, 2016, voters in the City of Seattle approved \$290,000,000 housing levy. The levy is directed at creating affordable housing for low income Seattle residents. A copy of the 2016 Seattle Housing Levy fact sheet is included as an attachment.

Additionally Mayor Ed Murray and King County Executive Dow Constantine are moving forward with placing a funding measure on this fall's ballot aimed at funding a response to homelessness. On April 3, 2017, Mayor Murray unveiled a change of plans for raising money to combat homelessness. Instead of asking voters to approve a \$275 million property tax levy this year, as he had previously

promised, Seattle will partner with King County to run a 2018 ballot measure to raise regional sales taxes by 0.1 percent.

As elected officials and service providers promise, the new proposal will indeed be “bigger and bolder” as well as regional: Between 2018 and 2027 it would raise more than \$800 million, according to King County estimates. At this point there are no details available about the sales tax proposal.

The City of Seattle declared a housing emergency in November 2015.

**Everett Summary:**

In July 2014 Mayor Ray Stephanson convened the Everett Community Streets Initiative Task Force. The mission of the Task Force was to foster a vibrant and healthy community by better understanding the street-level social issues in Everett’s commercial core areas and identifying potential short- and long-term actions for the community to address those issues.

The final report, issued on November 13, 2014, identifies 63 recommended actions. The report notes the City’s commitment to develop a framework for implementing those recommendations and to report back to the Task Force by the end of March. This Draft Implementation Framework documents the work that has been done in furtherance of that commitment.

A copy of the City of Everett’s Community Streets Initiative and an August 2015 Status Report are attached. Items of note include the addition of a social service professional to the Everett Police Department and a contract with the United Way to provide an employee to help the City manage and implement the initiative. Everett did not pursue additional funding through a levy.

**Neighborhood/Community Interests:**

Affordable housing and homelessness and its impacts are of community-wide concern.

**Options:**

Receive the report and provide feedback. Consider options for future presentation to City Council.

**Financial Impact:**

None at this time.

**Attachments:**

March 30, 2017 Housing Forum Notes  
Bellingham Home Fund Summary  
Bellingham Home Fund Link  
Vancouver Affordable Housing Fund Administration and Financial Plan  
2016 Seattle Housing Levy Fact Sheet  
Everett Community Streets Initiative  
Everett Community Streets Initiative Update  
RCW 84.52.105 Affordable Housing Levies Authorized