



October 30, 2014

To: Seattle City Council

As you know, the Center City Roundtable is a broad-based alliance of downtown Seattle stakeholders, united in a shared commitment to improving the quality of life for all who live, work and visit the Center City. We include neighborhood associations, human services providers, business leaders and civil rights advocates, and have been working together voluntarily for the past two years to advance a common vision of a healthy community.

We are troubled by the number of people in need in downtown and Capitol Hill and the level of illegal activity and are committed to working together in a collaborative fashion to advance new strategies and resources to achieve tangible improvements in both areas.

We are writing to express our overall support for Mayor Murray's proposed 2015 budget, to urge certain additions, and to request that the Council apply a particular framework to advance the priorities the Mayor has identified, as well as other necessary investments.

### *Strategic Investment in Social Services*

We urge the Council to support a "Center City"-style consensus-based planning process to

1. Identify social services gaps and develop a plan to resolve them, within a true "Housing First" framework as detailed below;
2. Establish a framework for taking to scale the integration of law enforcement and human services that has been piloted in the LEAD program, which clarifies the role of the police in addressing behavioral health issues and homelessness; and

3. Fund the carefully considered recommendations in the Seattle Human Services Coalition's Budget for a Just and Thriving Community, as well as fund new investments in helping people find safe adequate shelter off the streets. Of particular importance to us are funds to implement the recommendations of the Mayor's task force on unsheltered people (\$500,000), and \$500,000 to expand capacity in current survival service programs.

### *Increasing Police Capacity and Police Visibility*

We urge your adoption of the Mayor's budget proposal to increase police hiring. Increased capacity for deterrence and enforcement is appropriate to address illegal, violent and dangerous behavior. We recognize that not all public order and health issues in our community involve people who are homeless, mentally ill or addicted, though the balance of our letter addresses the needs of such individuals. We support a more visible police presence downtown, to enhance actual and perceived safety and to deter crime.

Seattle is not alone in the need for new approaches to the public order issues that accompany unmet human needs. Thanks to the Council and other local leaders, we are further along than many cities in figuring out how to effectively partner law enforcement and human services approaches to assist individuals in need and reduce illegal activity. Locally, much of this conversation over the past few years has occurred in the context of the Center City Initiative and has focused on initiatives such as Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) and the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT). We greatly appreciate Mayor Murray's continued support of these programs.

Yet as those involved in LEAD and the MDT recognize, we must squarely confront limitations in the social services infrastructure in the coming biennium at a policy level if we want to see deep changes on the street – as we do. We need Seattle and King County to commit to a true Housing First platform, in which we find housing solutions (not just temporary shelter) for those struggling with substance abuse or seeking to overcome criminal history. Everyone lives somewhere, and unless we make intentional provision for housing these more challenging populations, by default, vestibules, parks and greenbelts become the housing of last resort. That serves no one's interest.

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Seattle has become a city others look to figure out a new paradigm for engaging these issues. Many of our elected leaders have shown vision and courage in supporting this new approach. The Center City Roundtable pledges to provide robust community support. It is time to deeply commit to this integrated approach, to fully invest in it, and to ensure that the missions of all relevant city agencies are aligned with it.

Thank you for your work to solve these challenging issues and for your consideration of our comments.



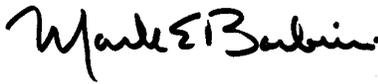
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