

Seattle gives first details on how \$275M homelessness levy would be spent

The Seattle Times, by Vernal Coleman, *Seattle Times* staff reporter, originally published March 8, 2017 at 1:08 pm, updated March 8, 2017 at 1:37 pm



Tents have multiplied in a grassy area near Royal Brougham Way and Airport Way in the Sodo neighborhood of Seattle. (Bettina Hansen/The Seattle Times)

The proposed property-tax levy, which raise \$275 million in Seattle over five years, would pay for long-term and short-term rent subsidies and put money toward expanding local shelters, among other things.

The \$275 million that would be raised through a Seattle property-tax levy proposed by Mayor Ed Murray would be used to pay for long-term and short-term rent subsidies, the expansion of local shelters and several other services for the homeless, the city announced Wednesday.

Murray announced the levy proposal, which would double what the city currently spends on services for the homeless, in his State of the City address Feb. 21. On Wednesday, the city offered the first details about it how it would spend the money.

An advisory group led by venture capitalist Nick Hanauer and Downtown Emergency Service Center director Daniel Malone, along with City Councilmembers Sally Bagshaw and Debora Juarez, have spent the weeks since hammering out the details of the proposal.

Hanauer brought the idea for the ballot initiative to Murray and has spent a year working on the issue.

The mayor and City Council budgeted about \$60 million to spend on homeless services this year, and the proposed levy would raise an additional \$55 million per year.

The current plan is to qualify the levy for the August ballot as a citizens' initiative rather than as a city proposition by the mayor and council. The campaign would need to collect at least 20,638 valid voter signatures to do that. The measure would raise \$275 million in property taxes over five years.

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