

Assessment of Union Gospel Mission’s East Duwamish Greenbelt Encampment Outreach

August 18, 2016

Section I: Introduction

Beginning May 23, 2016, the Union Gospel Mission (UGM) outreach team has executed intensive outreach to the I-5 East Duwamish Greenbelt Encampments (EDGE). The outreach team was composed of six outreach staff in the field and additional mental health, case management, and support personnel who work with those who accept offers of housing, shelter, or services. The outreach team has decades of combined experience with homeless services and outreach, and includes team members who have personally experienced homelessness and addiction. The team has been working with every individual, presenting meaningful and highly personalized offers of shelter and services.

As of July 31, 2016, the outreach team had contacted and engaged 357 separate individuals, making extensive outreach efforts in both the early morning, mid-day, and late evening in order to maximize the opportunity to engage as many people as possible. A total of 70 individuals (roughly 1 in 5) have accepted offers of housing, shelter, services, and/or relocation assistance. The outreach team estimates that it has contacted or engaged with 99 percent of individuals living in the EDGE with multiple interactions. In some areas of the EDGE, there is very clear drug distribution and human trafficking activity. The outreach team made initial contact with those individuals but did not attempted to engage them with offers of shelter or services.

Summary

Engagement Effort totals since May 23rd:

- 357 people engaged personally by UGM Outreach Team
- 70 people accepting housing, shelter, services and/or relocation assistance
- 43 (estimate) of people who have moved into the area
- 118 (estimate) people remaining in the EDGE area

Housing, Shelter and Services Provided

- 45 received assistance in relocating (to authorized or other unauthorized encampments)
- 21 entered recovery programs, which include housing
- 4 received legal aid (immigration papers, IDs, other housing barriers)
- 3 accepted transitional housing/rapid rehousing
- 4 received assistance with alternative shelter arrangements
- 2 received assistance with immigration status issues
- Multiple accepted assistance with medical issues

UGM estimates that approximately 75% or about 250 individuals have departed the I-5 Greenbelt in the last five weeks; 31 additional people have moved into the area or returned, leaving a total of 109 people remaining. The outreach team estimates that approximately 90 percent of the people living in the EDGE are struggling with substance abuse disorders.

UGM and partner service providers are making available a variety of options for permanent and transitional housing, shelters beds, authorized encampment spaces, access to addiction treatment and recovery programs (with housing), access to mental health treatment, medical care, legal services, and other services. The full list of resources is available below. The ethos of the outreach team is to find an

individualized solution for every situation. For example, if an individual would be willing to accept entry into a recovery program but does not want to be separated from a pet, UGM and the City have partnered with the Seattle Animal Shelter to house pets for up to 90 days. And if an individual is willing to go to a shelter but needs a place to store extra personal items, the City’s Department of Finance and Administrative Services has arranged storage of personal belongings.

To end homelessness for everyone, we must link people experiencing unsheltered homelessness (including people sleeping and living in encampments¹) with permanent housing opportunities matched with the right level of services to ensure that those housing opportunities are stable and successful. It is only through the provision of such opportunities that we can provide lasting solutions for individuals and communities. Across the country, many communities are wrestling with how to create effective solutions and provide such housing opportunities for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. In 2015, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) created [*Ending Homelessness for People Living in Encampments: Advancing the Dialogue*](#), a framework for developing local action plans. This document includes a checklist which is intended to aid policy-makers, government officials, and practitioners in developing a thoughtful, coordinated, and collaborative plan to ensure that people living in encampments are linked to permanent housing.

Using the checklist, provided by USICH, City staff have provided responsive actions to each of the guidelines below which include: Prepare with Adequate Time for Planning and Implementation; Collaborate Across Sectors and Systems; Perform Intensive and Persistent Outreach and Engagement; and Provide Low-Barrier Pathways to Permanent Housing.

Section II: Prepare with Adequate Time for Planning and Implementation

When developing an action plan:

- i. Determine Timing.** Articulate an action plan timeline so residents can determine their options and partners know the timeline for connecting people to housing.

UGM, with City and State partners, developed a timeline for outreach and engagement. It was determined that there be at least two weeks of outreach at a minimum, and that outreach would continue until every individual had engaged multiple times with a case manager who would develop a personal strategy for each resident. Though there is no pre-determined date by which the I-5 East Duwamish Greenbelt Encampments must be cleared, both UGM and the Mayor’s Office are working with the City Council before action is taken. From the point that both the Mayor’s Office and the Council determine that adequate outreach has been completed, there is an additional 10+ day timeline that would then begin. This involves WSDOT, the Washington State Department of Corrections, and several City departments such as the Seattle Police Department and the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation. In addition, it describes the details of posting notifications of coming actions in multiple languages.

- ii. Create Shared Purpose, Intent, and Outcomes.** Develop a common purpose and intent for all stakeholders that enhances collaborative efforts and helps partners identify resources and activities to achieve shared outcomes.

See East Duwamish Green Belt Assessment and City Council Resolution.

- iii. Develop Shared Protocols/MOU.** Create a Memorandum of Understanding that formalizes relationships among stakeholders and delineates protocols.

¹ USICH recognizes that different terms are used for such settings—such as “tent cities”—but has chosen to use “encampments” in this document, while encouraging communities to use whatever language works best locally.

While no formal MOU has been developed, the City and State have been working closely on shared protocols of a two phase action plan (Phase one – meaningful outreach and engagement. Phase two – clean-up, tree trimming, access road, and other recommendations from the design consultant). The City and State have entered into agreements related to funding for the EDGE effort. The City, UGM, and Salvation Army have informal agreements about their outreach and engagement, but do not have contracts or MOAs in place. UGM and Salvation Army are doing this work at no cost to the City or State.

- iv. Create a Communications Plan.** Incorporate a communications strategy for how to interact with the media and respond to questions from community members.

The communication process began with two separate press conferences. UGM is also providing weekly reports of progress to the City of Seattle Human Services Department. These reports are then compiled and shared with Council and local media outlets. In addition, there is a weekly conference call with all relevant partners, including public relations roles for the City and WSDOT.

- v. Identify the Land Owner(s).** Consider the needs of the land owner and determine his/her role.

The land owners, WSDOT with the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation and SDOT are actively participating in planning and coordination for this efforts. These partners participate in weekly conference calls with UGM and HSD.

- vi. Assess Needs of People Living in the Encampment.** Consistently assess the needs of every person.

UGM (and recently Salvation Army) are using trained outreach workers and a trust-building approach that progressively engages with people living in the East Duwamish Greenbelt. To date, they have contacted and offered services to 357 unduplicated individuals living in the EDGE. This outreach engagement is a daily activity which is highlighted in more detail through weekly reports to the City.

- vii. Identify Adequate Staffing and Resources.** Based on the projected need, determine how existing housing and services resources can be aligned to connect people to permanent housing.

Between UGM and their partnership with the Salvation Army, there are 10-12 outreach workers dedicated to the East Duwamish Greenbelt area. There is a service package that outreach workers can access which includes, but is not limited to, UGM shelters, Salvation Army shelters, other publically-funded shelters, flexible funds from WA State totaling \$100k, treatment beds, medical/health referrals, safe needle retrieval, and a variety of survival items like clothing, food, water, blankets, etc. The largest barrier is a 24-hour indoor or outdoor facility that accepts partners, pets, and storage for possessions that also allows for active drug and alcohol use. Very few no/low barrier shelter or encampment programs exist in Seattle.

- viii. Plan for Preventing Encampments from Being Recreated.** Create strategies for clean-up measures as well as how the site will be used and/or secured in the future.

The City of Seattle and WSDOT created an ongoing plan to remove trash and hazardous materials from the area. The plan includes a process for the initial clean-up and for ongoing maintenance and operations activities. WSDOT has secured funding to resurface the access road running on the west side of the freeway structure. This will allow SPD and WSDOT crews more reliable access to prevent open fires, gas cooking, and criminal activities. The City has also hired a design consultant to identify ways to secure the access points, activate the spaces, and provide better visibility under the structure. The draft consultant recommendations will be ready by the end of the summer and include both short and longer term options. The Department of Parks and Recreation will also remove excess brush in the City-owned properties to the

east of the freeway, allowing better staff and volunteer crew access.

- ix. Plan for Follow-up Contacts and Tracking Outcomes.** Include strategies for following up with people who have been assisted in order to track outcomes.

There are two separate strategies at play. Firstly, for those individuals who receive housing or other assistance (ranging from addiction recovery programs, domestic violence programs, to mental health programs), they will be working directly with case managers, who will establish an individualized plan. Secondly, for those individuals who may choose to relocate to an alternative encampment, there will be additional follow-up care provided, and a reasonable attempt will be made to connect them with additional service providers and available assistance.

- x. Standardize Future Responses.** Develop standardized approaches that incorporate law enforcement policies and agreements with housing providers.

This is part of the City’s long-term vision to address encampments. The size and scope of this location required a specialized approach which is being developed.

- xi. Integrate with the Community’s Strategic Efforts to End Homelessness.** Identify lessons that can strengthen the community’s overall homelessness crisis response system.

This is part of the City’s long-term vision to address encampments. In addition, this strategy is aligned with All Home of King County’s stated goals of making homelessness rare, brief, and one-time. This effort to assist people living under I-5 and in the East Duwamish Greenbelt area in moving out of the service area is a direct response to making homelessness brief, rather than to allow unsanctioned encampments to exist for multiple years. The City, in partnership with King County and All Home, are standing up a new Coordinated Entry for All system that will ease and quicken the shelter/housing response for unsheltered people across King County. The City is also leading an effort this year to assess funded outreach programs ensuring consistency of practice and processes that reach broader populations.

Section III: Collaborate Across Sectors and Systems

When developing or expanding a collaborative partnership, engage stakeholders, including:

- i. People Living in Encampments.** To help understand the needs and goals of residents.

Every effort has been made to connect with each individual living in the EDGE, and the outreach teams will continue to engage with each resident, working together to craft a highly personalized strategy. These outreach efforts are being conducted by UGM and Salvation Army. City staff have also asked East African Community Services to provide outreach to a group of young east African men living in the area to ensure culturally competent offers of services have been made.

- ii. Continuum of Care Agencies.** To provide expertise in coordinating system-level responses.

UGM Seattle President Jeff Lilley has been a longstanding member of the All Home effort, and the Committee to End Homelessness before it. UGM has hosted, and will continue to host ongoing service-provider roundtables to review unique needs and identify resources. In addition, partnership with multiple agencies has already been sought out, and is proving to be instrumental in addressing some of the more complicated challenges some of the residents are facing. UGM is also a member of a monthly group of Executive Directors that the Mayor has convened, and that the HSD Director facilitates. This group serves as an ongoing connection for service providers to collaborate and connect.

iii. Other Social Service and Healthcare Agencies. To provide access to data, resources and expertise.

HSD staff are working with Seattle/King County Public Health to schedule the Mobile Medical Van to stop at Royal Brougham and Airport Way. This will likely be established beginning in August. Other outreach programs like HOST, Healthcare for the Homeless, and REACH continue to serve the broader EDGE area. These organizations also participated in the initial assessment of the EDGE and helped to inform how outreach should be provided and what services were most needed. UGM is now working with the Salvation Army to enhance both the outreach efforts and the shelter opportunities available to people living in the EDGE. When a date for clean-up is established, HSD will engage more service providers to participate in an intensive service provision effort for those that remain living in the area.

iv. Community Outreach and Engagement Teams. To help develop the best engagement strategies.

See above.

v. Law Enforcement Agencies. To coordinate outreach and ensure the safety of all.

Law enforcement agencies have been included in the strategies and plans.

vi. Local Government Agencies and Officials. To help coordinate government resources and action, specifically:

- Elected Officials
- Planning, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works
- Human or Social Services Departments
- Public Health and Behavioral Health Care Departments

The City is working with each of the entities above on an ongoing basis as part of the EDGE response.

vii. Business Leaders. To leverage professional relationships to generate support and resources.

This has included outreach and communication to neighboring businesses, as well as developing partnerships with additional resources on an ongoing basis. For example, Extended Stay America has provide motel rooms for short-term housing options while a resident may be waiting for additional housing options.

viii. Philanthropic Organizations. To involve private funders that have interest in ending homelessness.

This is an ongoing effort, especially as it relates to the end goal of establishing a Navigation Center in Seattle that will provide low to no barrier, 24-hour shelter. Those living in the East Duwamish Greenbelt will be the first invited through the Navigation Center when opened (December 31, 2016).

ix. Faith-based Organizations. To provide volunteer and financial support.

UGM is a faith-based organization and has well-established relationships with congregations. Many of the volunteers and funds used for this broader outreach effort have been developed with UGM’s faith-based partners.

x. Advocates. To ensure that the voices of people in encampments are heard and raise other concerns.

There has been a significant public engagement and dialogue on this issue, included but not limited to engagement with a variety of provider and coalition leaders, people living in the EDGE area, and residents

living in the neighborhoods that surround the EDGE area.

Section IV: Perform Intensive and Persistent Outreach and Engagement

Implement outreach and engagement efforts throughout the process, including:

- i. Identifying All Members of the Encampment By Name and Implement Ongoing Outreach.** Having a full understanding of the population is important to scale resources and tailor interventions. All members of the encampment are known by name (including their pets). At the end of every day the outreach team reviews conversations and commitments and sets up the outreach strategy for the next day.
- ii. Maintaining a Consistent Presence in the Encampment.** Devote adequate time and resources to ensure trusting relationships are being developed with residents.

UGM indicates that most people have had contact with the team 5-10 times, with some deep engagements over that amount. The outreach team continues to visit the encampment at least five days a week, and usually over a six hour period each day. There are currently 10-12 members of the outreach team from UGM and the Salvation Army.

- iii. Maintaining Honest and Transparent Communication.** Transparency about the process and timelines ensures trusting relationships are formed.

The UGM Outreach team continues to build trust, but have not been able to give a firm timeline of when people need to move out. However, with each new update the outreach team receives, they pass this information directly to the people living in the EDGE. Having clear data of exactly when the EDGE area will be cleared will be helpful in providing clear, consistent information and strategy for those living in the area.

- iv. Identifying Leadership from within the Encampment.** Include such leaders in the process in order to better understand the needs and goals of people and to strengthen relationships.

Due to the large area being served, and the number of people, there are multiple sections of smaller encampments with “regional” leaders. They have been identified and are consulted directly regarding the process, and also in determining the needs for individual residents in their area.

- v. Cross-Training and Sharing Information.** Sharing information among outreach teams increases success by enabling partners to develop shared responses to both crisis and non-crisis situations.

There has been consistent overlap within the outreach teams, as well as daily debriefs regarding progress with each individual who was engaged on any given day. There are currently three separate outreach teams, but all of their efforts are coordinated, and their strategies overlap. These include UGM’s primary EDGE Outreach Team, UGM’s evening Search and Rescue Van teams, and additional teams from the Salvation Army.

- vi. Linking with Housing Search Services.** Outreach workers should partner with housing navigators, housing search specialists, and landlord liaisons to help people access housing.

UGM already works with a large population of individuals experiencing homelessness. Because of the nature of this work, UGM has key staff who regularly connect residents from their many programs to the appropriate housing as it becomes available. The EDGE outreach is no different. This has included, but is not limited to, the Salvation Army, Compass Housing, KentHOPE, Operation Nightwatch, LIHI (Othello

Village), Mary’s Place MoreLOVE Project, private housing providers (Extended Stay America), and others as the need arises.

Section V: Provide Low-Barrier Pathways to Permanent Housing

To provide a range of housing solutions, consider:

- i. Applying Housing First Strategies and Practices.** Remove obstacles, requirements, and expectations so that people can access housing as quickly as possible.

UGM works to connect people with the service/housing that best serves their needs, but not all of the providers they are partnered with are low barrier/housing first. Every effort is made to connect the individuals to the Continuum of Care providers who do have available Housing First units. Many, if not most, of these units are already set aside for individuals that the other providers are already working with; yet by connecting individuals with these agencies, they are then able to qualify to be placed into the agency housing.

- ii. Aligning Activities with the Existing Homeless Crisis Response and Coordinated Entry System.**

Coordinated entry assures people are prioritized for and provided housing and services that meet their needs.

There is no operational coordinated entry system for the single adult population in King County at this time. That said, All Home (in partnership with the City, County, and United Way) is in the process of developing Coordinated Entry for All (CEA) to ensure that all people experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equal access and are quickly identified, assessed for, and connected to housing and homeless assistance based on their strengths and needs. It will use standardized tools and practices, incorporate a system-wide housing first approach, and coordinate assistance so that those with the most severe service needs are prioritized. This new coordinated system, as well as a common assessment tool used for all populations including single adults is expected to be launched this summer.

- iii. Offering Interim Housing Opportunities and a Clear Path to Permanent Housing.** It is important to provide immediate, interim housing without barriers to entry while permanent housing is being secured.

Currently, most of the individuals are struggling with a substance abuse disorder. Every effort has been made to connect them to programs that can assist them. As for interim housing without barriers to entry (such as family configuration, allowance of pets, allowance of active drug/alcohol use, and storage of possessions), none are currently available in Seattle. That said, offers of indoor shelter, rapid rehousing, transitional housing, and travel assistance back to a home community where stable housing can be accessed have been offered and accepted. To date, UGM reports 64 unduplicated people have accepted some level of housing services referral.

- iv. Identifying an Adequate Supply of Housing Options.** People will need access to a variety of housing options, including permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, and mainstream affordable housing.

UGM has identified a variety of housing options for persons living in the EDGE. While there is not adequate housing for all persons living unsheltered in Seattle, HSD believes that UGM continues to explore all options available.

- v. Engaging State and Federal Partners.** Identify opportunities to align Federal, State, and local funding and programs to provide pathways to permanent housing.

Working in partnership with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations, City staff, and others, UGM is currently participating in weekly conference calls, as active participants in planning and coordinating local efforts to provide pathways to permanent housing. The Office of Intergovernmental Relations will work with City staff, County staff, and other stakeholders to identify legislative priorities as well as advocacy opportunities that promote funding and permanent housing solutions at the state and federal level.

Section VI: Conclusion

The Seattle Human Services Department concludes that action taken by UGM to address the critical needs of the individuals living in the I-5 East Duwamish Greenbelt were adequately prepared with adequate time for planning and implementation; collaborated across sectors and systems; performed intensive and persistent outreach and engagement; and provided low-barrier pathways to permanent housing. The actions taken by UGM are therefore consistent with the USCIH guidelines to ensure that people living in encampments are linked to permanent housing.