



City of Seattle

June 29, 2016

Seattle City Council
Seattle City Hall
600 Fourth Avenue, 2nd Fl.
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Councilmembers:

As we continue to work together following passage of Resolution 31671 related to the I-5 East Duwamish Greenbelt (Greenbelt), I wanted to share with you the work I have instructed my staff to carry out in accordance with our agreed upon approach. As you know, my goals from the outset have always been to address the public health and safety issues identified in the [assessment report](#) carried out by the State, County and City. While addressing these challenges, we would provide meaningful assistance and support to those living in the area. I believe our actions to date have made the conditions significantly less dangerous than they were when we first began these efforts. We have reduced the number of people living in the area by more than two-thirds, and outreach teams have built considerable trust with those who still remain. Our work is not finished, but it is worth noting the progress we have made together since the fatal shooting in November prompted us to act. The following are my proposed next steps.

Consistent with Resolution 31671, the Human Services Department (HSD) will provide the Council with a full report on outreach and engagement activities once they have determined in consultation with Union Gospel Mission (UGM) and other experts that meaningful services and shelter alternatives (within existing resources) have been offered to all the residents in the target area of the Greenbelt. Once this determination has been made by HSD, I will be seeking the Council's formal concurrence that we have met our expectations for this phase of our work.

I am pleased with the reports I have read from UGM suggesting that a large number of individuals have already accepted offers of shelter, while others have left the area voluntarily. To date, the remaining population in the area has been reportedly reduced to roughly 100 individuals, but we will continue this work and await a formal assessment of this effort by HSD.

Concurrently, I have instructed HSD, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) and the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to work with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to develop an operational plan to implement clean-up of the area and execute a series of infrastructure and environmental improvements intended to address health and safety issues as well as access for maintenance activities for those that work in the

Greenbelt area. These actions are consistent with those outlined in Resolution 31671 to create a safer environment for everyone. Once this plan is complete, we will transmit it to the Council for approval.

To be clear, in order to execute the infrastructure and environmental safety improvements, individuals living in the Greenbelt areas targeted for improvements will be requested to move. This work cannot be implemented efficiently or safely without relocating some individuals. I will only proceed with this approach if the Council agrees to the operational plan.

In order to minimize the impact on those living in the Greenbelt during this phase of work, I have directed staff to explore the possibility of an interim encampment location that could be a low-barrier alternative place for these individuals to stay. This site would only be available until the Navigation Center is operational before the end of the year – as that program model will be focused on providing the flexible supports and 24-7 shelter to work with residents of the Greenbelt. To be clear, our intent here is to maximize the alternative encampment options available for individuals to temporarily relocate as the City does its work and as the Navigation Center is readied for opening.

I have said on numerous occasions that this is such a challenging area that fully securing the area is unlikely. But, again, I have seen firsthand how conditions are already improving as a result of our intense outreach and engagement efforts. Furthermore, the infrastructure investments the State will be making will advance our goals to create a safer and healthier environment going forward. My goal is that we make progress toward addressing what had become such a uniquely dangerous environment that encouraged criminal activity to take place with regularity in the Greenbelt. The physical improvements and the person-centered efforts together, I believe, will move the needle on minimizing the public safety and health challenges in this area that have emerged over years and years of neglect. I also recognize the possibility that people may return to the area after we complete our infrastructure work. At the same time, there is an equal possibility that the work we do to make the area less hidden and subject to more activity along the newly installed roads will make the area a less attractive place to live. In either case, I am advancing efforts to improve and expand our homeless services in hopes that we will continue to give people alternatives and effective assistance and options other than living under I-5.

I am looking forward to continuing our work together on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward B. Murray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Edward B. Murray
Mayor