

Initial Issue Identification “Center City Initiative”

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2013-2014 Budget Request

- \$133,000 for HSD to contract for case management and outreach workers.
- \$150,000 for 2,307 more hours of police overtime to supplement existing MID resources.

Problem

Certain criminal and non-criminal activity in the downtown core can make it feel unsafe and unpleasant for some people and has led to concerns about public safety and negative impacts on economic vitality. Problem behaviors range from clearly illegal (drug dealing) to behavior that might be classified as annoying or intimidating but is not illegal, e.g. loitering.

Executive’s Proposed solution

Add additional resources to Seattle Police Department (SPD) and Human Service Department (HSD) to supplement existing City efforts to increase contact with individuals in the downtown core thought to be responsible for criminal activity and street disorder. SPD and HSD will make referrals and help connect individuals with appropriate social and mental services. The Executive has indicated its proposal has two goals:

“A fundamental goal of the initiative is to reduce the incidents of incivility, threatening and intimidating behaviors and illegal activities that are impacting the health and livability of the downtown neighborhoods.

A companion goal is addressing the needs of those in obvious poverty or distress on the streets in downtown neighborhoods.”

Proposed Activities

- SPD will work with HSD and service providers to identify individuals exhibiting problematic behaviors that contribute to street disorder and criminal activities.
- SPD, HSD, King County (via Mobile Crisis Outreach Team) and external stakeholders will meet regularly to discuss coordinated strategies and possible referral pathways.

Theory of Change (program logic)

More frequent and personalized contact with individuals thought to be responsible for downtown criminal activity and street disorder will reduce incidents of incivility, threatening and intimidating behaviors and illegal activities. Improved coordination between SPD, HSD, and social service agencies will increase outreach effectiveness. More effective outreach that links individuals with services, as well as stepping up enforcement of illegal activity, will help reduce crime, fear of crime, and the number of street disorder incidents downtown.

Unknowns:

- The size and composition of the various populations thought to be contributing to street disorder.
- The magnitude of various negative behaviors (loitering, drug dealing, aggressive panhandling) in relationship to the overall problem. Are the various activities contributing to street disorder and crime occurring in equal measure and frequency? Are some activities considered more important and of higher priority to resolve than others?

Underlying Assumptions of Theory of Change

- Individuals contributing to street disorder are interested in receiving services but just need help accessing services.
- Appropriate services are available for those who want them.
- Engaging individuals contributing to street disorder can have a positive impact even if they aren't interested in accessing services.
- Focusing on populations in need of social services will ameliorate street disorder problems (or perceptions thereof).
- Additional HSD outreach and policing will not merely displace individuals from one area of the city to another.
- The proposed resources are sufficient to make an impact & coordination efforts will be successful.

Central Staff Observations

- Assuming Council agrees with the goals of the Executive's proposal (reduce street disorder and connect more people with social services), clear outcomes and indicators of what success looks like need to be identified.
- Without clarity around the size, composition, and needs of the populations targeted for outreach, it will be difficult to determine the most appropriate set of strategies to employ.
- It would be helpful to know what specific strategies will be used and what services will be offered for particular problem behaviors. It may be easier to come up with a solution to address clearly illegal activity than it will be for certain behaviors that make some people uncomfortable but are not illegal.
- Results may not be apparent or visible if Seattle's street population continues to grow.

Options

1. The area in which the proposed resources are to be deployed is large and thus, it will be important to deploy resources in a methodical and strategic manner. Possible strategies to focus the proposal more sharply could include directing the Executive to:
 - a. Focus resources on those individuals disproportionately responsible for complaints in the area.

- b. Initially focus resources on a particular location within the downtown core, such as the Central Business District (bounded by 1st and 4th and University and Virginia) and Waterfront areas.
 - c. Place greater emphasis on certain activities, for example: clearly illegal activities vs. behaviors that are not illegal but contribute towards street disorder.
2. Approve SPD overtime funding while withholding HSD funding (via proviso) until HSD returns with a comprehensive outreach strategy.

Rationale:

- SPD can immediately begin to use the requested overtime to address illegal behaviors. It can also work with its Crisis Intervention Team to identify individuals whose behaviors are generating the greatest concerns.
 - The funding for more outreach could be withheld until the City has more information on the size and composition of the populations in question and what services are most needed and actually available. Based on this information, HSD should develop an outreach plan that delineates how outreach would be used to link people to the necessary services or resolve certain undesirable behavior on the street.
3. Approve Executive's budget as proposed but require HSD to come back (via a SLI) with outreach plan/strategy as discussed above.