

Seattle OKs \$145 million housing levy

BY CYDNEY GILLIS
REAL CHANGE NEWS

The ayes have it for putting a \$145 million low-income housing levy on Seattle's fall ballot.

Seattle's City Council unanimously approved a seven-year, \$145 million levy renewal proposed in April by Mayor Greg Nickels — with some critical modifications that housing advocates had sought. Among them, the council adopted language in the levy's underlying ordinance on how the levy's \$104 million rental housing fund, which is expected to subsidize 1,670 affordable units, can be spent.

Where the mayor had proposed spending at least 55 percent of the rental housing money on units serving the poorest — those with incomes at or below 30 percent of area median (\$17,700 for one person) — the council stipulated at least 60 percent will be spent for poorest and no more than 10 percent for those making 61 to 80 percent of median (\$35,400 to \$47,200) — a category, housing advocates argued, that's in less need of rental subsidies.

Some advocates had urged the council to top the mayor's proposal and raise the levy to \$167 million, but Councilmember Tim Burgess lamented that there just weren't the votes to do it. Councilmember Jan Drago, who is running against Nickels for mayor, put forward a motion for a \$120 million levy, arguing it would stand a better chance with voters, but, in the end, she, too, voted for the \$145 million measure.

"We got what we wanted. That was great," said the Seattle Displacement Coalition's John Fox after the meeting. "Without qualification, we can strongly support the levy."

Courtesy of Real Change News, Seattle, Wash.



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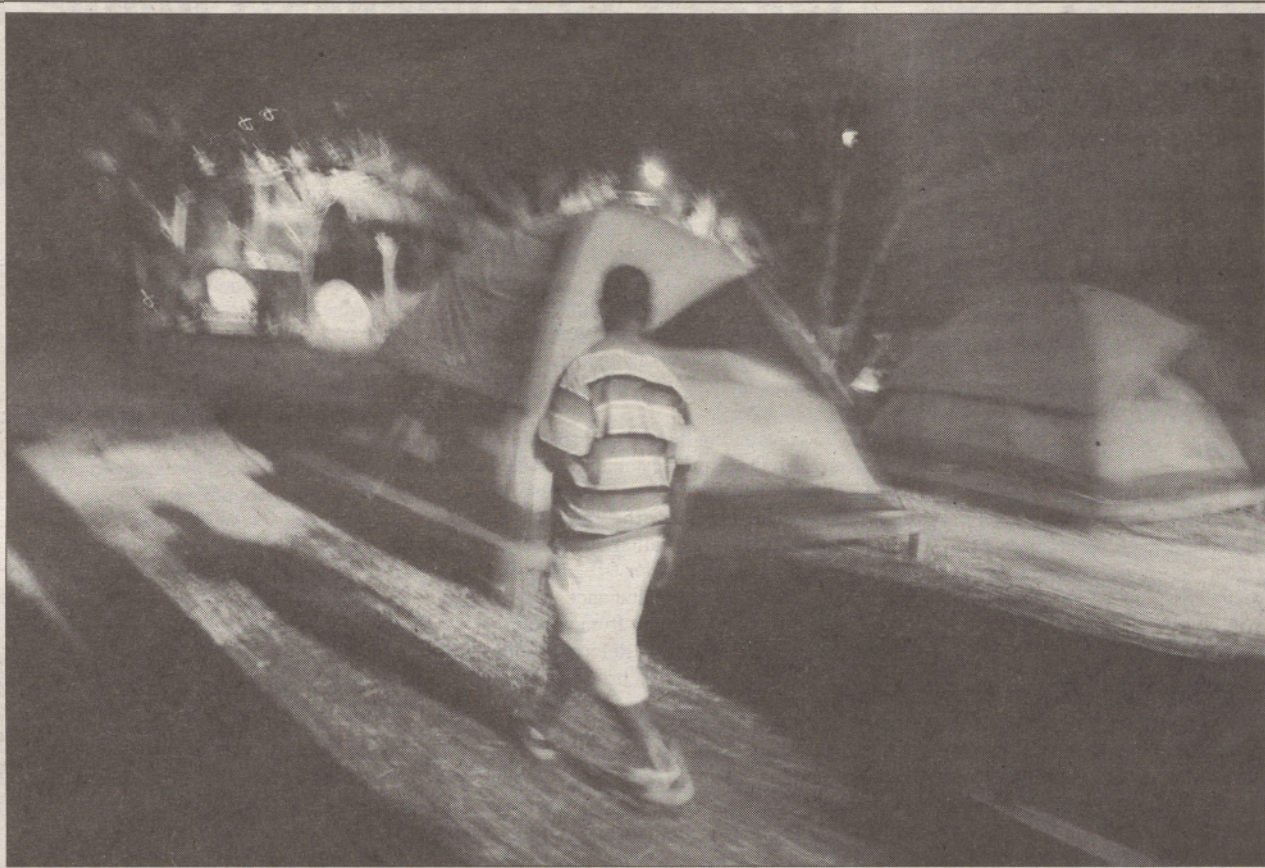


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Night vision

A resident walks to his tent at the tent city homeless community, known as Pinellas Hope in Pinellas Park, Florida June 6, 2009. A Florida tent city for hundreds of homeless people lies at the end of a dead-end street, but residents say they have not given up hope of a better life despite the U.S. economic downturn. The Pinellas Hope camp, 250 single-person tents in neat rows on land owned by the Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg in a wooded area north of the city, has room for about 270 and has been filled to capacity since it opened two years ago.

Survey: Foreclosures driving up homelessness

STAFF REPORTS

In a national survey of homeless service and advocacy agencies, 79 percent of respondents stated that at least some of their clients were homeless as a result of foreclosure, and about half estimated that more than 10 percent of their clients were homeless because of foreclosure on a home they had been occupying.

The survey was commissioned by a partnership of national homeless organizations, including the National Coalition for the Homeless, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, and the National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness. They have release a joint report on the impact of the foreclosure and economic crises and the unprecedented growth in the number of individuals and families left without a home in the United States.

During 2008, RealtyTrac reported 3,157,806 foreclosure filings — default notices, auction sale notices and bank repossessions, an 81 percent jump from 2007 and a 225 percent increase from 2006.

"We are one step away from foreclosure. More and more families and children are affected by job loss and the economy. 'Getting back on your feet' is next to impossible in today's society. The public needs to be made aware of who is becoming homeless... and that they could be next — just like any average family," an individual respondent to the national survey from North Carolina reported.

The study found that there are many interrelated consequences of the economic downturn that lead to both home

foreclosure and to homelessness. There is an increased need for affordable housing, as well as targeted legal assistance, health care, living-wage jobs, income supports, access to education, civil rights protections and the various supports that will continue to be needed as a result of the recession.

John Parvensky, Board of Directors President for the National Coalition for the Homeless and Executive Director of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless states,

"This report underscores the fact that we as a nation need to strengthen our efforts to prevent homelessness resulting from this economic crisis, while creating sufficient new affordable rental housing to ensure that no family in America has to experience the tragedy of homelessness."

Source: National Coalition for the Homeless, Washington, D.C.

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