



Legislation Text

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Clerk 09/29/2005

A MOTION endorsing the White Center Community Enhancement Initiative.

WHEREAS, White Center is a 3.4-square-mile community west of State Route 509 between the city of Seattle and the city of Burien in the unincorporated area of North Highline, and

WHEREAS, White Center is a community of over twenty thousand residents, representing seventy-seven nationalities and speaking fifty-nine languages, that has come together to make a difference for future generations, and

WHEREAS, the community expressed through the adopted White Center Community Action Plan (Ordinance 11568) that "the mixture of cultural communities and economic groups that make up White Center contribute to its unique character and is reflected in businesses, community organizations, public art, and local celebrations," and

WHEREAS, King County joins the community in celebrating the ethnic diversity and economic integration of White Center, and values its role as a gateway to the region, as well as a home and destination, and

WHEREAS, the community in collaboration with the King County Housing Authority and King County made a great advancement towards achieving greater economic integration by pursuing and winning a Hope VI grant to finance the Greenbridge development, which will replace five hundred sixty-nine units of severely distressed public housing with a new nine hundred to one thousand one hundred-unit mixed-income community, and

WHEREAS, King County invested over ten million dollars in Greenbridge, and

WHEREAS, in the state of the county address, Executive Sims committed to "continue to play a leadership role in creating healthy neighborhoods that nurture and enrich our citizens' lives," and

WHEREAS, the executive is dedicated to addressing the unique conditions of White Center that have challenged its development as a healthy neighborhood, including:

A. White Center is primarily a low-income community with a large immigrant and refugee population, the two poorest census tracts in King County and the image of a "broken window" community;

B. Youth in White Center are troubled by a very high drop out rate limited economic resources and a constant gang presence;

C. According to a 2003 survey conducted by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, seventy-five percent of King County residents use a computer and access the web at home, while only sixty percent of White Center respondents reported at-home use of these resources;

D. King County's current fiscal crisis has limited the resources available to provide urban local services throughout King County, including in the North Highline communities and White Center; and

E. North Highline is the largest, unclaimed unincorporated urban area in King County and due to the county's current fiscal crisis has experienced significant cuts in programs and service levels in the last few years, similar to unincorporated urban areas countywide, and

WHEREAS, the King County annexation initiative, launched in 2004, is a countywide effort to promote annexation and incorporation of the remaining urban unincorporated areas of King County, with one of the primary goals being to preserve the quality of local services to urban communities by transferring governance responsibilities to cities, which have more revenue options available for funding urban local services than does the county, and

WHEREAS, the cities of Burien and Seattle have expressed an interest in annexing all or portions of North Highline, which includes the White Center community, and

WHEREAS, the North Highline Unincorporated Area Council is studying the feasibility of forming a

new city through an incorporation of the North Highline communities, and

WHEREAS, the higher service need and comparatively low overall tax base of North Highline, including White Center, are seen as barriers to annexation and incorporation, and

WHEREAS, King County, through the annexation initiative, is committed to empowering residents in the North Highline community, including White Center, to select a local governance solution that accommodates the needs and desires of the community, and

WHEREAS, the White Center Community Enhancement Initiative is designed to give residents more local governance options by promoting economic development activities that will reduce the financial gap between revenues and costs and thereby make the community more attractive for annexation or incorporation, and

WHEREAS, the White Center Community Enhancement Initiative is a time-limited program whose success and continuation, and the continuation of programs it supports, are contingent upon transfer of local services to a city through annexation or incorporation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

The following policies and actions comprising the White Center Community Enhancement Initiative are hereby endorsed:

A. King County shall use county resources and public-private partnerships to support community organizations and residents in their efforts to create a healthy White Center;

B. To this end, King County shall work with existing community groups including, but not limited to, the North Highline Unincorporated Area Council, the White Center Community Development Association, the White Center Chamber of Commerce, the Highline School District, the King County Housing Authority, the Partners and Deputies Group, Making Connections and the general public to revisit and refine the community's vision for White Center, establish community-wide priorities, and develop a multifaceted funding strategy that refocuses and better coordinates county, nonprofit and private investment to achieve identified goals for

economic and community development by July 31, 2006;

C. King County strongly supports comprehensive community transformation efforts that create livable neighborhoods where people across the economic spectrum will choose to live and stay and that provide an avenue for residents to connect to the multitude of services and economic opportunities this region provides, a policy that is in perfect alignment with the Greenbridge HOPE VI investment;

D. King County shall use county resources and public-private partnerships to spur economic development, enhance parks and open spaces, provide community services and housing opportunities and accelerate annexation or incorporation with the ultimate goal of supporting a vibrant, mixed-income, diverse community in White Center and the North Highline communities;

E King County will leverage recent investments in new sidewalks along 16th Ave SW between 100th and Roxbury to encourage local businesses to participate in a Façade Improvement Program and Road Improvement Districts, which are programs that will enliven community streetscapes, enhance the pedestrian experience and make the shopping district more appealing, and collaborate with community organizations to address litter and illegal dumping concerns;

F. King County shall modify land use and zoning changes to promote the development of underutilized parcels, similar to actions taken in 2005 Amendments to the King County Comprehensive Plan 2004, and shall evaluate opportunities to enhance or redevelop county-owned properties consistent with economic and community development priorities;

G. King County shall encourage private development consistent with zoning and land use policies by promoting architectural designs and building orientations that maximize the development potential of properties and facilitate walking and smart growth;

H. King County shall pursue the recommendations of the Land Use, Transportation, Air Quality, and Health ("LUTAGH") study in the White Center community wherever possible, which include: rezoning targeted areas to allow infill duplexes and triplexes to increase residential density; completing the sidewalk and

street drainage system; creating an international marketplace and small business incubator or similar pedestrian destination; developing alternative affordable housing options; establishing a strong pedestrian link from the new Greenbridge housing to the business district of White Center, and rezoning underutilized industrial areas to allow for more mixed-used development in the central business core;

I. King County shall ensure that the White Center Bog and SW 98th Street serve as a safe and attractive pedestrian connection between the White Center central business district and the Greenbridge development by seeking additional funds from public and private partners;

J. King County shall encourage community groups and nonprofit organizations to participate in the Association Development and Operations Partnership ("ADOP"), Urban Reforestation and Habitat Restoration Grant Fund and Natural Resource Stewardship Network grant programs to improve parks and open spaces;

K. King County shall in the 2006 budget maintain its eight-million-dollar regional funding investment in human services and continue to dismantle the economic barriers that limit homeownership and educational opportunities through innovative programs and strategic partnerships;

L. King County shall complete appropriate impact fee waivers, reducing construction costs by approximately seventy-five thousand six hundred dollars, to facilitate affordable housing development at Greenbridge by the end of 2005;

M. King County shall continue to support workforce and business development through the King County jobs initiative, Small Business Development Center and collaborations with the White Center Community Development Association;

N. King County shall seek "neighborhood revitalization strategy area" designation from HUD for White Center Central Business District and surrounding neighborhoods in order to provide greater flexibility in the use of federal block grants to support economic development and housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons;

O. King County shall invest in technology programs and partnerships to ensure youth and families in

the White Center community are afforded opportunities to succeed in an information-based society; and

P. King County shall evaluate the effectiveness of this initiative over the next six months and provide an assessment of whether the replication of initiative efforts would

be beneficial in other neighborhoods in North Highline and other unincorporated communities.