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From the Puget Sound Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/seattle/news/2018/07/23/third-choice-coalition-group-homelessness-seattle.html>

Business leaders and service providers form coalition to end chronic homelessness in Seattle

➔ SUBSCRIBER CONTENT: Jul 23, 2018, 3:56pm PDT Updated: Jul 24, 2018, 7:01am PDT

Before it was repealed, Chad Mackay said Seattle's tax on large businesses to fund homelessness services and affordable housing was going to be a rallying cry for the business community to come together.

After helping defeat the tax, the Fire & Vine Hospitality CEO is among the business leaders seeking a new plan.

Mackay and Sara Rankin, a professor at the Seattle University School of Law and director of its Homeless Rights Advocacy Project, have launched the Third Door Coalition with plans to recruit other experts in the business, research and public service realms to come up with the best solutions to solve chronic homelessness in Seattle within five years.



ANTHONY BOLANTE | PSBJ

El Gaucho's Chad Mackay is inviting business leaders, researchers and service providers to help end chronic homelessness in Seattle.

"Chronically homeless are the ones who cost the system a tremendous amount of money and the ones who are visible and who may scare us," Mackay said. "You look at the tremendous amount of resources allocated to managing emergency situations that doesn't actually get them out of homelessness."

The Business Journal tallied the cost of public and private spending on homelessness at more than \$1 billion a year in the Puget Sound region. Homelessness advocates and experts attribute the increasing demand for affordable housing to rising home prices fueled by the Seattle-area tech boom and the decline in housing funding.

The Third Door Coalition wants to focus on permanent supportive housing that will allow people to live there regardless of their sobriety or mental health issues, a method that has been proven to reduce costs and help people out of homelessness and into treatment, Mackay said.

So far, Mackay and Rankin have recruited Paul Lambros from Plymouth Housing, Daniel Malone from Downtown Emergency Services Center, Maria Barrientos from Barrientos Ryan Real Estate, Point B Capital consultant Henry Lin, Pagliacci Pizza co-owner Matt Galvin, Jeri Andrews from Intellectual Ventures and Seattle Hospitality Group founder and CEO Howard Wright. (Disclosure: Wright is also a Puget Sound Business Journal columnist.)

The Third Door Coalition hopes to name more members later.

The hope is to develop more affordable housing faster and more effectively, looking at state and local laws that may need to be updated for quicker design approval and construction and design. They also hope to work with the city to eliminate permit fees and other barriers and delays, Mackay said.

The coalition wants people to set aside their beliefs and the polarization that is typical of Seattle politics to have a dialog based on the evidence available.

He's hopeful that if the coalition approaches regulators with a package of ready-made solutions, it will get the support needed.

"The politics have gotten so much in the way that it wasn't going to come from City Hall," Mackay said. "It isn't door one or door two, this is the third door option."

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