The Mariners expenses include ~$375M requested in major maintenance, $250M in operations and maintenance and $160M in upgrades. They assess those needs in this report -- [http://www.ballpark.org/capital-needs-assessment.aspx](http://www.ballpark.org/capital-needs-assessment.aspx). Their revenue sources include ~$600M from ticket revenue, admission/parking taxes, Public Facilities District (PFD), etc. That leaves the Mariners a gap of $185M which they are requesting from taxpayers and the County to fill.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Some councilmembers may tell you that the legislation will specify that the $185 million from the Hotel-Motel Tax can only be used for essential maintenance. This is just semantics — the Mariners can just shift money around and use their other revenue, including taxpayer dollars, for the bells and whistles. The point is, this $185 million is what would allow them to do EVERYTHING in the report, including the $160 million in non-essential upgrades.

The need for taxpayers to fill that gap is the policy question. Taxpayers are already largely subsidizing the stadium – no property tax is paid, $175M from parking and admission taxes will go towards maintenance and the $1.5M/year rent they pay in the new lease will also go towards the stadium maintenance. All of these revenue sources benefit the sole tenant of this “public facility.” Plus, the team made a profit of $20M last year that could also fill that gap (reports here: [http://www.ballpark.org/materials.aspx](http://www.ballpark.org/materials.aspx)).

Even the PFD chair, Virginia Anderson, said that the “term sheet is not reliant on the County Council to approve or not approve that amount of money,” she said. “For us, we still have the terms of the agreed upon lease.”

Even with that, the Executive has transmitted a ~$185M proposal for Safeco Field upgrades that can indeed be spent instead on affordable housing. Right now, we are using the tax revenue for the MINIMUM amount that could be used for housing at 37.5%. The state laws says “at least” 37.5% for arts and cultural programs, “at least” 37.5% for affordable housing and “the remainder” for tourism promotion. The state law language can be found here: [http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=67.28.180](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=67.28.180)

Specifically, section 3(d) states that the revenues must be used as follows:

(i) At least thirty-seven and one-half percent of the revenues under this section must be deposited in the special account for art museums, cultural museums, heritage museums, the arts, and the performing arts (ii) At least thirty-seven and one-half percent of the revenues under this section must be used for contracts, loans, or grants to nonprofit organizations or public housing authorities for affordable workforce housing within one-half mile of a transit station, or for services for homeless youth; (iii) The remainder must be used for capital or operating programs that promote tourism and attract tourists to the county.
The Seattle head tax is gone but our housing affordability crisis is not. In the wake of this debate, we must seize the moment and take actions to help people afford to live in King County. Whether it is a young couple being able to buy their first home, someone working two jobs who still can barely afford rent, a senior trying to stay in their home, or a homeless veteran trying to find shelter— the high cost of housing hurts everyone.

The King County Council has three existing funding tools that we can use immediately:

1) Beginning in 2021, King County will be receiving money from the hotel/motel tax. State law requires that we spend at least 37.5% on affordable housing. King County should borrow against this permanent ongoing source of funding to build more housing immediately. If we do, it creates almost $100 million in additional funds towards workforce housing.

2) Later this year, short term rentals like Airbnb, will be taxed by the state just like hotel stays-- resulting in King County receiving an additional $3.5 million annually that must be spent on housing. If bonded, these funds could produce an additional $40 million available immediately.

3) Finally, the proposal to spend $185 million in county funds to help upgrade Safeco Field would be more appropriately funded by the Mariners Corporation—thus freeing up millions of dollars in hotel/motel funds that could also be spent on affordable housing. The County could eliminate the unnecessary optional upgrades at Safeco, cover the FULL Mariners maintenance gap of $25 million, and invest the remaining $160 million in housing.

These 3 EXISTING sources of funding allow the County to spend almost $300 million on housing over the next 20 years, with at least $140 million that could be invested immediately. -- and all without a tax increase.

Plus, with the County’s established record of developing housing throughout King County, we can make efficient and effective use of the dollars and start building now. There are a list of workforce housing developments being proposed by non-profit housing developers such as apartments where young teachers, service workers, seniors and others can afford to live. An infusion of supply will relieve pressure on the housing market for everyone.

By simply speeding up use of existing county tools, re-prioritizing the optional Safeco field upgrades, and implementing a very specific plan to build workforce housing, we not only can help with housing affordability, but also do so in way that might regain some public trust in local government along the way.