

RESOLUTION 2022-2

BASHER COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Anchorage, Alaska

A Resolution Regarding a Proposed Homeless Navigation Center at Tudor and Elmore Roads

Summary: The Basher Community Council (BCC) opposes building a mass-homeless shelter and navigation center at Tudor/Elmore near the current location of the Anchorage Police Department (APD) impound lot.

Whereas we recognize and appreciate the work of the Assembly and Administration as part of the Negotiated Process to increase capacity and resources for homeless community members by purchasing Sockeye Inn and Barratt Inn, enhancing existing services, and improving coordination.

Whereas within that plan, there is a proposal to construct a mass homeless shelter and navigation center at the corner of Tudor and Elmore near the current location of the APD impound lot;

Whereas there is no complete project plan including a clear and comprehensive scope of work that addresses community concerns and stakeholder requirements, includes all engineering and construction-related costs, an accurate schedule, a systematic risk assessment, a risk management plan, and annual operating expenses. Knowledgeable professionals estimate the cost to construct the facility to be \$35-40M when all expenses are fully considered;

Whereas there are existing buildings sitting vacant in Anchorage that could be purchased and renovated for much less money than building and operating a new complex. An assessment of potential locations was conducted but lacked a comprehensive side by side cost/benefit analysis with transparent public scrutiny;

Whereas the Sullivan arena provides a preview of the serious, negative, unintended effects of such a large shelter on the population it intends to serve as well the 10,000s of residents, two universities, university housing, and local businesses nearby. In winter 2021, near-deaths, violent sexual and physical assaults, thefts, and substance abuse violations were reported within and surrounding Sullivan along with significant illegal camping. The areas surrounding Brother Francis-Bean's Café have experienced similar issues, and the Municipality has not demonstrated the capability to manage or address them in either location. Unlike Sullivan, Brother Francis/Beans and Hope Gospel Mission which all have all curfews and prohibit alcohol and drugs, this facility will be a low/no-threshold, no-curfew facility increasing crime and safety risk;

Whereas municipal officials have not engaged actively with impacted community stakeholders despite all East Side community councils and several hundreds of people from across Anchorage testifying against the facility over the past eleven months. Basher community residents may not even be aware of the plan for a mass shelter/navigation center at this location and have not had a formal opportunity to learn about the proposal or express concerns through their community council;

Whereas the location of the proposed facility will result in increased wildfire risks, traffic incidents and other safety concerns listed as follows:

- This location is immediately adjacent to Far North Bicentennial Park (FNBP), a 4000-acre wild space which is Anchorage's largest park providing homes to wildlife, recreational opportunities for residents, and bordering many residential neighborhoods;

- Hillside neighborhoods are at great and increasing risk from wildfires, given large and growing volume of beetle-kill spruce trees. This project places a large facility into the most densely forested area in the City and will result in a mass influx of illegal camps, worsening the already high risk of dangerous, costly fires. Two years ago, a fire started in an illegal camp in the same area as this proposed location, tore through the woods, forced evacuations, and threatened lives. In summer 2021, Municipality Administration recommended diverting \$3.5 M beetle kill mitigation funds from Anchorage Parks and Recreation as a source of funding for this project;
- The Stuckagain Heights neighborhood, represented by Basher Community Council, has a single road in and out of the community which severely limits emergency access during a wildfire and puts several hundreds of lives and homes at risk;
- This location is bordered by Tudor Road, Elmore Road and Martin Luther King Drive, three high-speed traffic corridors with limited pedestrian crossings and where numerous pedestrian-auto accidents and deaths have already occurred;
- There are no stores with basic amenities such as groceries and personal care items located nearby. The closest grocery store is the Midtown Mall Carrs, more than three miles away.
- This facility and the increased illegal camping that will surround it will impact trails in FNBP park, bike trails throughout the area, and the Chuck Albrecht Softball Complex, leading to crime, theft and safety issues for users and increased hazardous refuse and garbage;

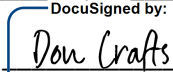
Whereas homelessness is an Anchorage-wide concern. We support smaller, tailored, and more personalized facilities spread throughout the community rather than concentrated in certain neighborhoods. This approach meets clients where they are at, provides targeted services and increases accountability. East Anchorage, Downtown and Spenard, have several facilities already. The Hope Gospel Mission, a 150-200-person facility in East Anchorage is less than ½-mile from the proposed facility and Safe Harbor is in Muldoon.

Whereas building such a facility does not require people to use it; it is not a prison. Many potential clients will choose not to use the resource for a variety of reasons, and they cannot be forced to do so.

Whereas Some cite success stories in other cities where homeless shelters “go unnoticed in communities with \$1M condos just blocks away” such as Pine Street Inn in Boston and the SAFE, Embarcadero Navigation Center in San Francisco. These examples might work well in densely populated urban areas more than 10X the size of Anchorage but they are false equivalencies. Urban homeless shelters located in commercial/industrial areas near high-rise residential and commercial structures are not the same as a mass homeless shelter in a residential/university/medical center area near a 4000-acre wilderness park.

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Basher Community Council opposes the proposed mass homeless shelter and navigation center at Tudor/Elmore.

ADOPTED this 31st day of March, 2022.

President: 
DocuSigned by: Donald Crafts

Date: 4/5/2022