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**Midtown Strategic Planning Session  
Report  
October 2023**

In October 2023, the Anchorage Midtown Community Council invited a small group of business and community leaders to discuss:

**Purpose/Target:** How to improve the safety in Midtown, Anchorage

**Dates:** October 23, 2023 (9:00a-12:00p / 2:00p–5:00p) and October 25, 2023 (2:00p–5:00p)

**Participants:**

- Kris Stoechner (Midtown Community Council)
- Greg McDonald (Midtown Community Council)
- Mike Mason (Midtown Community Council)
- Felix Rivera (Anchorage Assembly)
- Kyle Mirka (Allen & Peterson)
- Brian McCutcheon (South Central Foundation)
- Mike Bridges (First National Bank)
- Jared Solberg (Natural Pantry) (*Note: Attended 10/25/23 only*)

**Facilitator:** Karen Kirk / Synergistic Solutions

**Contents:**

• Process used for discussions .....	p.2
• Results of causes-and-contributors discussions .....	p.3
• Results of suggestions-to-address discussions .....	p.3
• ACTION-ITEMS / DELIVERABLES .....	p.4-7
• Appendix A: All discussion notes for causes-and-contributors .....	p.8
• Appendix B: All discussion notes for suggestions-to-address .....	p.9
• Appendix C: Easy overview chart .....	p.10,11



**Process:**

*Please note: This was a small (not all inclusive) group of leaders' broad stroke, first step attempt to address the target.*

The focus topic was identified as: **Reduce Crime and Vandalism in Midtown.**

The group used the following structured discussion process to address the focus topic:

- Step 1: Identify potential causes-of and contributors-to crime and vandalism in Midtown
  - Discuss and identify high priorities
- Step 2: Identify suggestions-to-address high priority causes-of and contributors-to (from Step 1)
  - Discuss and identify high priorities
- Step 3: Identify (broad stroke measures for) how to implement high priority suggestions (from Step 2)



## ACTION-ITEMS / DELIVERABLES:

- **Results of Step 3: Broad stroke implementation steps** for high prioritized suggestions-to-address causes-of and contributors-to crime and vandalism in Midtown:
  - **To address Mental Health and Substance 'Miss-use' Issues:**
    - Advocate: to Assembly and State to increase funding for services and detox beds
      - **Action:**
        - **Point person/lead: Mike Mason, Brian McCutcheon**
          - (Connect with: Michelle Baker and Katie Baldwin-J)
        - **Contact: Develop inventory/list of providers (tribal, nontribal, MHTA) Build coalition of individuals and entities who will identify champions and advocates to coordinate effort**
        - **Prep work needed: collect coalitions and municipal data on: crime, damage reports, number of homeless, etc.; collect health dept. data on: number of individuals not being served, waitlists, number of detox beds vs. demand, etc.; identify costs being incurred by inaction**
        - **Approach: Organize public testimony in support of proposal (relationship based / strength and outcome focused)**
          - Q4 23 – Coalition
          - Q1 24 - State
    - Provide a small navigation center (to route people to mental health & substance miss-use services)
      - Note: *This offers 1-1 meetings with people to share general information to help individuals 'get started' with programs/assistance/etc. It does not have services available on-site. It is not a treatment facility or bed-site.*
      - **Action:**
        - **Point person/lead: Mike Mason, Brian McCutcheon**
        - **Contact: Community and mental health center operators (Note: Same partners as deliverable above)**
        - **Prep work needed: Costs being incurred by inaction (Note: Same data as deliverable above)**
          - **Potentially a: Mobile roving vehicle**
        - **Approach: Midtown Community Council**
          - Q1 24



What follows are the results of each ('step' based) discussion. Please note 'high prioritized' means: The group was asked to prioritize the list they created, by identifying their top 3 concerns and top 3 suggestions. The results below show the discussion points that received priority from the majority of the group (meaning 4 or more individuals identified said point as a high priority).

- **Results of Step 1: High prioritized potential causes-of and contributors-to crime and vandalism**
  - **Mental health and substance 'miss-use' issues**
  - **Little-no penalties and/or consequences**
  - *Please see Appendix A for (all) discussed potential causes-of and contributors-to*
  
- **Results of Step 2: High prioritized suggestions-to-address high priority causes-of and contributors-to**
  - **To address mental health and substance 'miss-use' issues:**
    - Advocate to Assembly and State to increase funding for services and detox beds
    - Provide a small navigation center (to route people to mental health and substance miss-use services)
      - *Note: This center allows for a 1-1 meeting to provide general information to help individuals 'get started' with program/assistance/etc. It does not have services available on-site*
    - Advocate to MOA to coordinate available services (by identifying a person or small team to coordinate current city-wide services) and increase funding for outreach and case management
  - **To address little-no penalties and/or consequences:**
    - Encourage businesses to connect with organizations (ie: Chamber, AEDC, BOMA) to be a voice to local government to enforce laws and penalties
    - Advocate to state to change sentencing guidelines (ie: Increase consequences for crimes and vandalism; identify an 'intermediate-intervention' site; direct more mandatory community service)
    - Advocate to direct APD resources to focus on gangs and external influences and to bring in more federal resources
    - Increase police staffing
  - *Please see Appendix B for all suggestions-to-address high priority causes-of and contributors-to*
  
- **Please see Appendix C for easy-to-view chart of all:**
  - High prioritized causes-of and contributors-to and
  - Suggestions-to-address causes-of and contributors-to



- Advocate to MOA to coordinate available services (by identifying a person or small team to coordinate current city-wide services) and increase funding for outreach and case management
  - **Action:**
    - **Point person/lead: Kris Stoeher**
    - **Contact: Assembly person representing Midtown**
      - (Connect with: Felix, Meg, Chris and Daniel)
    - **Prep work needed: Data on prevalence of people 'slipping through the cracks', waitlists, etc. (provided by service providers)**  
**Note: Same data as deliverable above**  
**Data tells 'story' of currently silo'd services**  
  
**Consider funding\* a person or small team to identify and connect all city services (\*or is this person or team already funded?)**
    - **Approach: Midtown Community Council to approach Assembly**
      - **December**
    - **NOTE: First review recommendations from: Behavioral Health Task Force\***
    - \*Please see p.12 within the following link:  
  
[https://www.muni.org/Departments/Assembly/SiteAssets/Pages/FOCUS-Homelessness/ComplexBHTaskForceFullRecos\\_FINAL\\_9-5-23rev.pdf](https://www.muni.org/Departments/Assembly/SiteAssets/Pages/FOCUS-Homelessness/ComplexBHTaskForceFullRecos_FINAL_9-5-23rev.pdf)





- Increase police staffing
  - **Action focus: APD Raises**
    - **Point person/lead: Kris Stoechner**
    - **Contact: Mayor**
    - **Prep work needed: Data on wage comparison**
    - **Approach: Council letter to present issues and request face-to-face meeting**
      - **Timing: ASAP**
  - **Action focus: APD Retirement**
    - **Point person/lead: Kris Stoechner, Felix Rivera**
    - **Contact: Governor, Senate, House**
    - **Prep work needed: 'Comparables' of Alaska to other states; vacancies; leaving for other jurisdictions**
    - **Approach: Council letter to present issues and request face-to-face meetings**
      - **Timing: Before January 2024**
- *Suggested next steps:*
  - *For each deliverable noted above: the point person/lead:*
    - *Develops/invites a team/task force to begin work on **implementation steps***
    - *Ensure the team/task force:*
      - *Identifies steps that need taken and*
      - *Due dates for each step and/or project completion*
    - *Follow-up and follow-through with task force progress*



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## Appendix A:

(All) discussed potential causes-of and contributors-to crime and vandalism in Midtown, Anchorage

- A1 Mental health issues and substance miss-use / addiction issues
  - 1.1 Not enough detox facilities / detox beds
  - 1.2 Not enough (or no?) intermediate levels of intervention
  - 1.3 Disconnect with how mental health and addiction services are offered (ie: handing someone a 'card' isn't an effective approach)
- A2 Little-no penalties and/or consequences
  - 2.1 If people don't call in (to police), police won't have metrics to build staffing to respond
  - 2.2 Lack of police staffing
  - 2.3 Lack of prosecution
  - 2.4 Some people discharged from jail are sent to Cuddy Park
- A3 Criminal intent (choice of)
  - 3.1 Gang activity
  - 3.2 External influences (ie: gangs with shopping lists)
- A4 Increase in homelessness
  - 4.1 Sheltered / unsheltered populations
  - 4.2 Anchorage is an island of other communities problems
  - 4.3 Poverty / economics
  - 4.4 Stealing for need vs. personal gain
  - 4.5 Hopelessness
- A5 Other:
  - 5.1 High cost of living
  - 5.2 No ownership of an area (ie: Midtown) if/when people are just passing through
  - 5.3 Youth with nothing to do
  - 5.4 No public restrooms





## Appendix B:

(All) suggestions-to-address high priority causes-of and contributors-to crime and vandalism in Midtown, Anchorage

### B.1 Mental health and substance miss-use issues

- 1.1 Advocate to Assembly and State to increase funding for services and detox beds
- 1.2 Identify a small navigation center in midtown; to provide 1-1 guidance to direct people to resources (no onsite services or beds)
- 1.3 Advocate to MOA for:
  - Coordination of city-wide (mental health and substance miss-use) services and
  - Increase funding for outreach and case management
- 1.4 Develop advertising campaign that highlights mental health and substance miss-use services (how to access) (include testimonials)
- 1.5 Encourage businesses to train (1-2) employees in mental health awareness and de-escalation training

### B.2 Little-no penalties and / or consequences

- 2.1 Encourage businesses to connect with organizations (Chamber, AEDC, BOMA) to be a voice to speak to local government to enforce laws and penalties
- 2.2 Advocate for direction of APD resources to focus on gangs /external influences and to bring in federal resources
- 2.3 Advocate to state to change sentencing guidelines
  - le: Increase consequences for crime and vandalism; direct more mandatory community service; develop an intermediate-intervention site
- 2.4 Increase police staffing
- 2.5 Develop a campaign to encourage people to increase reporting of crime and vandalism to 311 and 911
- 2.6 Identify / track: number of 311/911 calls from midtown; number of people charged; number of people prosecuted; number of dismissals

### B.3 Increase Security *(Note: This category was added by the facilitator, for organizational ease of reference, to place suggestions that came under the heading of 'increase security')*

- 3.1 Encourage businesses to partner with each other to hire shared-security-services
- 3.2 Increase neighborhood community patrols
- 3.3 Encourage businesses and residents to utilize: cameras / lighting of dark lots and parking areas / alarms / fencing / locking-up (buildings, residences and vehicles)



**Appendix C:**  
Chart of:

- Potential causes-of and contributors-to crime and vandalism in Midtown Anchorage and
  - Suggestions-to-address causes-of and contributors-to



