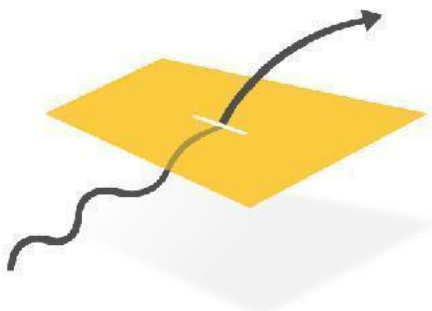


Call to Action from District One Leadership

October 2023

Prepared by:



PROFESSIONAL GROWTH SYSTEMS

Realize Potential

Dear Mayor Bronson and Members of the Anchorage Assembly,

As you are all aware, our beautiful city is facing a challenge of immense significance that urgently calls for our collective attention and unwavering commitment to resolve - the ongoing homelessness crisis. This challenge is not one that can be overcome by one task force, stroke of the pen action, single funding allocation or traditional politics.

It is with this understanding, compassion, and concern for the whole of Anchorage, that we come to you as a collective voice of leadership for the District One communities. As we joined together on this challenge, we understood that the following foundational elements were required for successfully improving the state of our city.

Data-Driven Decision Making:

The availability of data, research, and analytical tools in today's world is unprecedented. As we move forward into the Spring of 2024, we need to harness the power of data and analytics to gain valuable insights into the root cause of homelessness, enabling us to develop targeted, effective solutions. Utilizing data to drive decision making will not only optimize our resource allocation, but also ensure accountability to Anchorage residents and businesses.

Citizenship and Stewardship:

Throughout this crisis we have heard from many people of truly terrible, life-altering stories that are happening on our streets. We have also heard stories from citizens who wish to help, but are turned away due to bureaucratic policies and red tape. Together, we need to reaffirm our communities' commitment and ability to be good stewards to all people in Anchorage. By finding solutions to red tape, engaging the community that wishes to assist through volunteerism, and empathizing with others, we can foster a sense of belonging and support for those experiencing homelessness.

Improved Politics:

With any challenge, we expect our political leaders to react with strong leadership, and finding the correct balance between individual rights and autonomy is of the utmost importance. It is critical that we put away our political posturing during this crisis and move forward with increased collaboration. This effort is not an individual job or vote to win, but a collective effort of good citizenship for everyone who steps into our once thriving city of Anchorage.

While each of our districts has its individual identifiers, we all agree that the common good lies at the heart of our city's success. A city that cares for its most vulnerable residents is a city that flourishes for all. Our vision for Anchorage is one where homelessness is a relic of the past, replaced by a compassionate, effective and efficient support system that empowers individuals to regain their independence. We envision an Anchorage where every person has a safe place to call home, and where economic opportunity thrives.

Funding:

Addressing homelessness is a complex statewide and pressing issue that requires substantial resources and strategic investments. To move forward effectively without increasing the burden on Anchorage taxpayers, it is imperative that we seek state and federal funding. By securing additional funding from higher levels of government, we can leverage resources that do not directly impact local tax rates. Collaborating with state and federal parties is a prudent and responsible path towards alleviating homelessness while preserving the financial well-being of our community.

In addition to state and federal funding we also encourage developing strong partnerships, removing barriers and increasing incentives for non-profit organizations and businesses to assist in this crisis. Working together all sectors could create powerful synergies in a collective effort. This approach not only spreads the financial responsibility more broadly, but also ensures that we have the necessary financial firepower to implement the comprehensive solutions that we have outlined below: Shelter, Treatment and Enforcement.

The District One Leadership calls upon Mayor Bronson, his Administration and the Anchorage Assembly to coordinate, develop and present a specific action plan to the state legislature for funding by the end of November 2023.

Shelter:

In recent years, Anchorage has echoed the principle of “housing first” in our approach to homelessness. Regrettably, we have also witnessed tragedies unfold at larger shelter facilities such as the Sullivan Arena, Centennial Park, the 3rd Avenue camp, and Cuddy / National Archives. Homelessness is not a one-size-fits all challenge, it exists on a continuum of care.

Our community leaders are in agreement that addressing homelessness necessitates additional shelters, but we now understand that smaller, intentionally located shelters should be the cornerstone of Anchorage’s strategy moving forward. These smaller shelters offer a multitude of advantages - they are more manageable, easier to individually maintain, and most importantly they provide individuals experiencing homelessness the opportunity to find the right environment as they journey towards housing stability. Smaller shelters offer an indirect solution by fostering a sense of community among residents and allowing shelter managers and service providers to build meaningful relationships with those seeking assistance, ultimately providing more effective support.

The District One Leadership calls upon Mayor Bronson, his Administration and the Anchorage Assembly to prioritize the establishment of smaller tiered levels of shelters for our homeless population, and define a plan for those who are unaccounted for, unable or unwilling to go into a shelter.

Treatment:

Recognizing that we are not trained professionals nor experts in providing treatment to individuals facing homelessness, we acknowledge the pressing need for increased care and support for those navigating the challenges of homelessness. This is where we need our leaders to play a pivotal role in guiding us through a data-driven, bi-partisan effort to chart a clear and effective path forward. Our shared objective is to ensure that those experiencing homelessness have easy and affordable access to the vital services required to regain their agency and attain housing stability. We understand that additional funding may be necessary to meet these goals, as mentioned in our Funding section we strongly feel that state and federal funding opportunities for these resources should be prioritized.

The District One Leadership calls upon Mayor Bronson, his Administration and the Anchorage Assembly to develop and execute a comprehensive, data-backed, actionable plan aimed to provide essential resources to individuals experiencing homelessness.

Enforcement:

One of the paramount concerns that demands the attention of the Mayor, his Administration and the Anchorage Assembly is the escalating criminal activity that is impacting the safety of Anchorage's population and local businesses. As we have emphasized in our introduction, we firmly believe that our community can navigate through this challenge with the core principles of good citizenship and stewardship. Good citizenship entails upholding a shared set of moral values, cultural norms, and laws that define our society. When these principles are violated without consequence, it sends conflicting messages to those both adhering to these laws and those who are not.

Unfortunately, we have personally witnessed the consequences of failing to hold individuals accountable for their actions, manifesting in incidents of assault, theft and other serious offenses. An absence of prosecution has bred a sense of impunity among some individuals, leading them to believe they are beyond the reach of the law. It is crucial to clarify that our intent is not to stigmatize the homeless population, but rather to assert that, within any demographic, there will be bad actors who must be held accountable for their actions.

While we strongly advocate for the provision of adequate small shelters and treatment plans to address underlying issues, we must acknowledge the enduring need to enforce all laws including violations of Title 8 Misdemeanors as they safeguard the well-being of residents and businesses. Our community residents have expressed their nervousness about taking children to the parks, concerns over theft and damage to their property and unsanitary living conditions across the homeless encampments. Additionally, in numerous instances across the United States of America and within Anchorage, businesses have been unable to sustain ongoing losses due to theft, property damage or loss of business due to safety concerns. Losing our business partners will not only result in diminished tax revenue, but also will curtail employment opportunities for our hard-working citizens.

The District One Leadership team has spoken at length about multiple approaches and new tools to address this issue. First is to mitigate misdemeanors with systematic solutions to basic human needs such as food, water and restroom availability. The next is to collaborate with Neighborhood Guardian teams and local businesses to find safe ways to deescalate adverse situations, and enforce laws such as petty theft and shoplifting at their respective locations. We believe a combined effort of systematically meeting the needs of the homeless population with basic human needs, as well as holding a firm line of accountability against crime can improve life for all community members.

The District One Leadership calls upon Mayor Bronson, his Administration, the Anchorage Assembly, the Anchorage Chief of Police, and the Municipal Attorney's Office to review the current philosophy and system of enforcement and then develop a strategic plan which includes utilization of new tools moving forward.

In conclusion, the District One Leadership reiterates its firm belief that the, Mayor Bronson, his Administration and the Anchorage Assembly must take decisive action to serve the entire Anchorage population by prioritizing these call to actions:

- 1. The District One Leadership calls upon Mayor Bronson, his Administration and the Anchorage Assembly to coordinate, develop and present a specific action plan to the state legislature for funding by the end of November 2023.*
- 2. The District One Leadership calls upon Mayor Bronson, his Administration and the Anchorage Assembly to prioritize the establishment of smaller tiered levels of shelters for our homeless population, and define a plan for those who are unaccounted for, unable or unwilling to go into a shelter.*
- 3. The District One Leadership calls upon Mayor Bronson, his Administration and the Anchorage Assembly to develop and execute a comprehensive, data-backed, actionable plan aimed to provide essential resources to individuals experiencing homelessness.*
- 4. The District One Leadership calls upon Mayor Bronson, his Administration, the Anchorage Assembly, the Anchorage Chief of Police, and the Municipal Attorney's Office to review the current philosophy and system of enforcement and then develop a strategic plan which includes utilization of new tools moving forward.*

It is through these concerted efforts that we can build a strong, more inclusive Anchorage, where every resident has the opportunity to thrive.

Sincerely,
District One Leadership Team

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Professional Growth Systems (PGS) was selected by the District One Community Council Leadership to facilitate and combine their thoughts into one voice as a call to action for the ongoing homelessness crisis in Anchorage.