

MIDTOWN COMMUNITY COUNCIL DRAFT RESOLUTION # 2023-04 R2

A RESOLUTION CALLING UPON THE MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE TO TAKE MEANINGFUL ACTION TO PROVIDE SAFE SHELTER FOR THE UNHOUSED POPULATION AND REDUCE CRIME IN MIDTOWN

WHEREAS, Midtown Anchorage has become an area where crime is being allowed to run rampant: physical and verbal assault, urination, defecation, sexual intercourse, theft, and vandalism are everyday events occurring out in the open on every street.

WHEREAS, Midtown businesses have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars—potentially millions of dollars—investing in security systems, repairing and replacing property that has been criminally damaged or stolen; cleaning human waste; and replacing and incentivizing employees whose jobs have been rendered physically dangerous and whose morale has been destroyed;

WHEREAS, most Midtown business owners have given up filing police reports, because they know the Anchorage Police Department has not been given the resources to respond to non-violent incidents;

WHEREAS, the rampant criminal activity in Midtown is harming every segment of Midtown's population;

WHEREAS, for two summers in a row, MOA has closed its only low-barrier shelter (the Sullivan Arena) without providing replacement shelter, turning hundreds of people out on the streets with nowhere to go;

WHEREAS, the Municipality currently has no low-barrier shelter available to the 700+ individuals experiencing homelessness within its borders;

WHEREAS, a person forced to live on the streets without access to resources must devote all their energy to surviving, and take whatever actions are necessary to survive;

WHEREAS, many individuals experiencing homelessness suffer from mental health issues, addiction, and other ailments that merit support in the form of social and medical services;

WHEREAS, in both 2022 and 2023, the Municipality's closure of the Sullivan Arena mass shelter, without any replacement shelter option, correlated with increased criminal activity in Midtown;

WHEREAS, based on the observations and experiences of Midtown business owners, a significant percentage of criminal activity in Midtown is being conducted by unhoused individuals who commit crimes out of desperation;

WHEREAS, unhoused individuals themselves are also being victimized in Midtown because of the high rate of crime;

WHEREAS, the Municipality has a responsibility to provide safe shelter, access to services, and resources to unhoused individuals, to help them get on a path to stable housing, instead of perpetuating a cycle of homelessness and crime;

WHEREAS, the Municipality formed a Community Task Force tasked with evaluating the feasibility of allowed camps as one way to assist unhoused individuals in the short term; and on

July 11, 2023, the Anchorage Assembly accepted the Task Force's final report into the public record as AIM 140-2023 and it is now available online at <https://ancgov.info/allowedcamps-report>;

WHEREAS, the Task Force's final report contains numerous recommendations regarding safe and effective operation of allowed camps;

WHEREAS, on July 11, 2023, the Anchorage Assembly passed AO-2023-70(S-1), As Amended, an ordinance characterized as "defin[ing] allowed camps with required site and operational standards" and intended to enable a "pilot project" of a single allowed camp, with up to five allowed camps eventually spread out around Anchorage;

WHEREAS, AO-2023-70(S-1), As Amended, fails to actually impose meaningful standards and requirements, including failing to impose standards and requirements recommended by the Task Force; and moreover leaves it to the Mayor's office to select sites for and operate the allowed camps;

WHEREAS, an allowed camp in Midtown operated without reference to best practices is likely to make the Midtown situation worse, and not better;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Midtown Community Council urges the Mayor of Anchorage, the Anchorage Assembly, and the Anchorage Police Department to:

- Take meaningful action, informed by best practices, to address the Municipality's homelessness crisis in both the short-term and the long-term;
- To immediately take tangible, sensible steps to provide safe, low-barrier shelter capable of accommodating several hundred individuals;
- To increase law enforcement or other patrols in Midtown, with the goal of deterring criminal action through increased police visibility and compassionate community policing;
- To provide support to Midtown businesses and residents who are suffering from financial harm, employee attrition, lost business, and physical threats, through measures such as regular Municipality-provided cleaning of fouled sidewalks, doorways, and other spaces;
- To keep the Midtown Community Council informed and collaborate with the Midtown Community Council on additional measures that can be taken to improve the situation; and
- To consult with the Midtown Community Council regarding the location and operational requirements of any intended allowed camp in Midtown.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 27th day of July, 2023.

Yes: 17 No: 1 Abstained: 0

*Kristine Stoechner*

Midtown Community Council President