

2023 in Review: A letter from Mayor Bronson

Dear Anchorage Residents,

Happy New Year! As we usher in 2024, I want to take a moment to reflect on the accomplishments and progress we made together in 2023. It was a year defined by resilience, growth, and collective effort, and I am honored to have the opportunity to serve as your mayor.

My top priorities as mayor are **homelessness, housing, Cook Inlet natural gas, public safety, the Port of Alaska, and our economy**. I am grateful for the collective effort that has gone into achieving the milestones to advance these priorities, and I want to express my appreciation to all residents for your resilience and dedication to making Anchorage an even better place to live, work, and thrive. As we embark on the new year, let's continue to build on these achievements and work together to address the challenges that lie ahead.

Wishing you all a prosperous and fulfilling 2024!

Sincerely,

Mayor Dave Bronson

Homelessness

Last year, we made significant advancements in bringing on more affordable housing units through hotel conversions and we were fortunate to have been able to use a vacant municipal property as a cold weather shelter. We opened the former Golden Lion as affordable housing for highly vulnerable people. Additionally, [by signing onto a U.S. Supreme Court Amicus brief](#), we demonstrated our commitment to working collaboratively with partners to find innovative solutions to these complex challenges. Lastly, to close out 2023, my administration announced its support of the Next Step Initiative – this is an effort to move 150 people out of shelter and into permanent housing by the end of April 2024, thus saving the municipal taxpayers over 1.3 million dollars.

Since 2020, Anchorage has experienced a 40% increase in housing costs coupled with low housing inventory and high cost of living. This has exacerbated our homeless issue. With a record-breaking number of individuals on the cold weather shelter reservation list last fall, we know the need for a congregate shelter is necessary. We also know that housing coupled with wrap-around services is the most cost-effective method for supporting unsheltered individuals.

Housing

As the Mayor of Anchorage, I am committed to steering our city towards a future marked by progress, and a pivotal aspect of this journey is addressing our housing needs.

Recently, I had the honor of [signing an amended methane gas agreement](#) between Eklutna, Incorporated, and the Municipality of Anchorage. This landmark achievement is set to bring approximately 1,100 new homes to the market in Eagle River, not only enhancing our community but also acting as a catalyst for economic growth.

In tandem with expanding our housing stock, we are diligently working on municipal code changes. These changes aim to provide builders and property owners with increased flexibility, fostering innovation in both design and construction. By doing so, we are paving the way for a more dynamic and resilient housing landscape.

Our commitment to justice and equity in housing is further underscored by our collaborative efforts. Last fall I participated in a discussion with Senator Dan Sullivan, members of the Anchorage Assembly, leaders in the building community, and representatives from rural Alaska communities. Together, we had a constructive dialogue with U.S. HUD Secretary Marsha Fudge. Our collective advocacy focused on securing a funding formula that accurately reflects Anchorage's unique needs and challenges in the realm of housing. This collaborative approach aligns with our broader vision to increase housing affordability and accessibility.



Cook Inlet Natural Gas

Southcentral Alaska communities heat their homes and businesses by natural gas produced in the Cook Inlet. Over the last several months, alarm bells have been ringing to bring awareness to the natural gas production shortage that could potentially result in the need to import natural gas, increasing consumers' heating bills by approximately 50%. We know Cook Inlet has the gas we need to keep the heat and lights on for years to come, but producing it is very expensive and it has a low return on investment. This issue is quickly becoming the number one priority among government leaders, producers in the region, and utility companies. To keep you informed on the matter, [I established the Southcentral Mayors' Energy Coalition](#). Mayors from various communities in the Southcentral region have joined this effort aimed to examine the natural gas energy requirements of Southcentral Alaska. It will delve into potential solutions while evaluating associated expenses and the accessibility of natural resources.

The primary objective of the coalition is to serve as an advocate for local governments. It is committed to fostering open communication with communities throughout the region, utility companies, and lawmakers. This collaborative effort is dedicated to addressing the shortage in natural gas production.





Mayor Bronson presents certificate of graduation at APD academy graduation



Public Safety

Ensuring the safety of our community remains a paramount concern. I am pleased to report that through the budget process, no cuts were made to the Anchorage Police Department (APD) or the Anchorage Fire Department (AFD). Additionally, APD police officers received the largest pay raise in history, recognizing the dedication and hard work of our law enforcement officers.

My administration took an innovative approach to negotiate a deal with the APDEA that secured significant support from all sides.

This collaborative effort not only gives our public safety officers a wage that they deserve, but it will also aid in our recruitment and retention efforts so we can have a fully staffed police force.

Furthermore, the successful completion of a third academy for AFD added eight probationary firefighters to serve our community, and the addition of two new aerial fire apparatuses underscore our commitment to enhancing emergency response capabilities.

Port of Alaska

Since taking office, my administration has successfully secured an unprecedented \$270 million in funding for the Port of Alaska – the largest financial allocation obtained during a single administration. These funds have played a pivotal role in the ongoing modernization efforts aimed at ensuring the Port's seamless operations.

Notable accomplishments include:

- The completion of the initial phase of the North Extension Step 1 project over two seasons.
- Commencement of the construction of a new Administration building, with substantial progress achieved.
- Initiation of the final design phase for the Cargo Terminal 1 project.
- Hosting a Contractor Outreach event to actively encourage participation in the forthcoming procurement for the Cargo Terminal 1 Construction.

The Port of Alaska is our vital lifeline. It handles a staggering 75% of all inbound cargo for the entire state and supplies 90% of Alaskans with essential life sustaining commodities such as food and fuel. The significant investment and ongoing projects emphasize our commitment to fortifying the port's infrastructure and maintaining its critical role in supporting the well-being of our State.



Port of Alaska tour

Economy

The backbone of our economy is our small business owners and their employees who keep innovating to put the economy on an exciting upward trend. Anchorage relies heavily on its tourism industry and thanks largely to the talented efforts of Visit Anchorage, 2023 was a record-breaking year for tourism

Downtown Anchorage, the heart of our city, is emerging from pandemic challenges, undergoing a renaissance with the establishment of the Mushing District and significant business developments that infuse energy and vitality into our urban core, attracting people back to downtown Anchorage.


Landmark projects such as Northlink Aviation's new cargo terminal, and global power players like Amazon building new facilities within the municipality demonstrates that Anchorage is a preferred location for corporations seeking to do business,



putting hundreds of residents to work.s

Furthermore, the Sullivan Arena is BACK. Last summer, the Sully was closed as a shelter and has been brought back to its intended purpose. We have a great new operator who is committed to bringing events back to the community at the Sullivan Arena this year.






MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

1st ANNUAL MAYOR'S
**CITYWIDE
JOB
FAIR**

January 12th | 10.00 AM TO 4.30 PM
AT THE DENA'INA CENTER

**Begin your New Year with a new
great work opportunity with the
Municipality of Anchorage and
partners at the Mayor's
Citywide Job Fair!**

JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FIELD OF
Manufacturing | Healthcare | Administrative Support | Machine Operators |
Professional Sales | Engineering | Advertising | Retail | Restaurant & Food | Service |
Finance | Information Technology | Law Enforcement | Emergency Services | & more

Free Parking in the 6th & H Garage from  **EasyPark**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
HREmployment@anchorageak.gov

Mayor's Citywide Job Fair

Recognizing the challenges in the current job market, we are taking a proactive approach in 2024. Anchorage will kick off the year by hosting the first annual Mayor's Citywide Job Fair. This initiative aims to connect job seekers with opportunities and support our local businesses by offering free booth space and parking. The job fair is next Friday, January 12 from 10 AM – 4:30 PM at the Dena'ina Center.



[SUBSCRIBE](#)



MUNICIPALITY OF
ANCHORAGE

Copyright (C) 2024 Mayor Dave Bronson. All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:
Mayor Dave Bronson P.O. Box 196650 Anchorage, AK 99519 USA