

PRESS RELEASE



Assembly Members Announce Plan to Address the Immediate Humanitarian Crisis

July 14, 2022

From: Assembly Members Felix Rivera, Kameron Perez-Verdia and Daniel Volland

At this week's Assembly meeting, Assembly Members Kameron Perez-Verdia and Felix Rivera introduced two resolutions as the first steps in a plan to address the ongoing humanitarian housing crisis in the Municipality of Anchorage. New Member Daniel Volland later signed on as a third sponsor of the resolutions.

The closure of the Sullivan Arena as a COVID-19 mass care congregate facility on June 30, which forced 60 people on the street or into the Centennial Park Campground, has led to what has been widely considered a disaster on the streets of the Municipality of Anchorage. At the June 29 Special Housing and Homelessness Committee Meeting, the Bronson administration admitted that it does not have a long-term plan to address this crisis and is willing to work with the Assembly.

"I appreciate the olive branch put out by the mayor," Assembly Member Felix Rivera said, chair of the Assembly's Committee on Housing and Homelessness. "Working with my colleagues, we have put together a responsible, timely and humane plan that remedies this artificially caused crisis and helps us to prepare for emergency shelter needs for this upcoming winter."

The plan put forward by Members Perez-Verdia, Rivera and Volland includes five parts, four of which are incorporated in the items introduced yesterday:

- 1) \$500K to remodel and immediately open up 60 rental units
- 2) \$2M to fund emergency shelter needs through the end of 2022
- 3) \$1.5M for outreach services
- 4) \$3.4M to complete capital funding for the Guest House opening up 130 units
- 5) \$12.6M for purchase of another hotel to open up to 120 units.

According to Assembly Member Kameron Perez-Verdia, "Our plan to address the current crisis is informed by years of community work to develop a comprehensive approach to address homelessness, known as the *Anchored Home* plan. Our proposal leverages public-private partnerships to address the immediate crisis and build for the future so we don't end up in this untenable situation again."

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Due to the lack of proper transition planning from the administration, there are currently 350 unhoused people on the streets of Anchorage, an all-time record high. Although community members and nonprofit partners have put in countless hours and made extraordinary donations to make these efforts work in the short term, this work is not sustainable.

“It is wrong that our community’s most vulnerable people have been displaced from the Sullivan congregate facility with little to no resources to fend for themselves,” said Assembly Member Daniel Volland. “If it wasn’t for community members stepping up to help and advocate for the people affected by the crisis, it would be even worse. I thank everyone who has helped and want you to know that your compassion has not gone unnoticed.”

This plan, if approved by the Assembly, will bring online an anticipated over 300 units of housing and will, for the first time in the history of the Municipality, forward-fund our emergency shelter needs months in advance of the 2022-2023 winter season. The resolutions will be reviewed at the Housing and Homelessness Committee meeting on Wednesday, July 20 and a worksession will be requested before the public hearing and Assembly action at the July 26 regular Assembly meeting.

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