

# Policy Memo: True North Recovery Launchpad Grant

**From:** Assembly Member Daniel Volland

**Recommendation:** Vote No on AM 295-2026 as currently proposed.

## Executive Summary

AM 295-2026 would award up to **\$750,000** in CDBG funds to True North Recovery Inc. to acquire property at **1217 E. 10th Avenue** for the Anchorage Launchpad Program, described as a behavioral health and navigation services center for adults seeking treatment. The program would offer behavioral health assessments, mobile outreach, peer navigation, outpatient service access, group and individual rooms, showers, and related services.

These services are important. Anchorage needs behavioral health treatment, substance-use recovery pathways, peer navigation, and low-barrier service access. But the policy question is not whether the service is valuable. The question is whether the Municipality should continue placing region-serving social services in the same small geography, particularly Fairview and east downtown, when the Assembly has already adopted a policy of dispersed placement.

## District and Neighborhood Context

Assembly District 1 contains Anchorage's downtown core and several of the city's oldest, most diverse, most historically burdened neighborhoods, including Fairview, Mountain View, Government Hill, and surrounding central neighborhoods. Fairview in particular has long carried infrastructure and land-use burdens that serve the broader city while imposing localized impacts.

Fairview is one of Anchorage's original neighborhoods and is widely recognized as a diverse, working-class community. Visit Anchorage describes Fairview as one of the city's original four neighborhoods and says it continues to reflect Anchorage's diversity. Alaska.org similarly notes that Fairview residents value the neighborhood's diversity, affordability, and central location.

Fairview and Eastchester Flats also have a painful history of racial and economic injustice. Because of housing discrimination, Black residents were excluded from much of Anchorage and concentrated in and around Eastchester Flats. The Municipality's own historical materials state that Eastchester Flats was one of the only unrestricted districts where Black residents could live. The Anchorage Museum likewise notes that Black Alaskans settled in Eastchester Flats because it was one of the few places they could buy or rent.

That history was compounded by urban renewal and demolition. SAH Archipedia describes Eastchester Flats as a dynamic community with Alaska's only concentration of Black-owned businesses before being targeted for demolition in the late 1960s as part of urban renewal. Alaska Public Media has reported that restrictive covenants and housing discrimination affected Black and Alaska Native residents across Anchorage well into the 20th century.

This history matters. A neighborhood that was shaped by exclusionary housing practices, infrastructure disruption, and urban renewal should not continue to be treated as the default location for region-serving crisis, shelter, behavioral health, and substance-use services.

## **Existing Assembly Policy**

The Assembly has already spoken directly to this issue. In **AR 2018-167**, the Assembly declared a policy of **dispersed placement in the Anchorage Bowl** for services and programs for homeless persons. The resolution recognized that the Municipality had, for years, placed or supported services in east downtown and north Fairview.

The resolution found that shelter and emergency support services were concentrated in this area, including Brother Francis Shelter, Bean's Café, Downtown Soup Kitchen Hope Center, and other providers. It also found that downtown and Fairview hosted **82%** of the Municipality's year-round emergency overnight shelter beds, creating secondary impacts borne by the surrounding neighborhood.

Most importantly, AR 2018-167 declares that when the Municipality has the opportunity to locate or recommend locations for new or relocated services, it should first consider locations dispersed throughout other areas of the Anchorage Bowl.

AM 295-2026 is exactly such an opportunity. The Municipality is not merely acknowledging a private service provider. It is proposing to use public funds to help acquire property for a new behavioral health and navigation hub. That makes the location a policy choice.

## **Current Service Concentration**

The attached MOA Safety Net Shelter & Crisis System document confirms that many major shelter, housing, navigation, and crisis resources remain concentrated in or near District 1. Listed facilities include Brother Francis Shelter at **1021 E. 3rd Avenue**, Downtown Hope Center at **240 E. 3rd Avenue**, 3rd Avenue Resource & Navigation Center at **1101 E. 3rd Avenue**, Bean's Café at **1020 E. 4th Avenue**, Linda's Place at **1911 E. 5th Avenue**, Henning House at **545 E. 4th Avenue**, Covenant House at **755 A Street**, McKinnell House at **1712 A Street**, and other nearby resources.

In addition to these facilities, a number of **behavioral health, recovery, and supportive housing resources are also located within the same geographic cluster or immediately adjacent areas**, further reinforcing the concentration:

- **Karluk Manor** (200 Karluk Street) – a permanent supportive housing project for chronically homeless individuals with substance use disorders, located in downtown Anchorage.
- **The GuestHouse (AAHLT)** – part of the Alaska Affordable Housing & Land Trust portfolio, with units located in the downtown core, including near East 4th Avenue. One of my (Member Volland's) first cosponsored appropriations, at time of purchase the

GuestHouse has 20 beds of permanent supportive housing and 110 beds of extremely low income housing.

- **Southcentral Foundation's Quyana Clubhouse** (101 W. Benson Boulevard) – a peer-support and recovery-oriented clubhouse serving individuals experiencing mental illness and substance use challenges, located in Midtown just south of downtown.
- **Alaska Mental Health Consumer Web (Peer Support Services)** (300 W. 31st Avenue area) – a longstanding peer-led organization providing recovery support and community integration services, also located in the central Anchorage corridor.
- **Alaska Behavioral Health** (1231 Gambell Street) – one of the largest behavioral health providers in the state, with services concentrated in the central bowl.
- **In Our Backyard at Central Lutheran Church** (1420 Cordova Street) – micro unit transitional housing and supportive services provider located within Fairview.

Taken together, these facilities illustrate a clear pattern: **Anchorage's shelter system, crisis response infrastructure, behavioral health services, recovery supports, and supportive housing are overwhelmingly clustered in a narrow corridor spanning Downtown and Fairview.**

While some degree of clustering can support coordination of care, the current level of concentration is not incidental — it is the result of decades of siting decisions that have placed region-serving services in the same neighborhoods. As the Assembly recognized in AR 2018-167, this concentration creates secondary impacts that are borne disproportionately by Fairview and surrounding communities, even as those services are used by residents from across the entire Municipality.

AM 295-2026 would add yet another behavioral health and substance-use service hub within this already saturated geography, further intensifying a pattern the Assembly has explicitly directed the Municipality to change.

## **Policy Rationale for Opposition**

### **1. The proposal conflicts with adopted Assembly policy.**

The Assembly's adopted policy is not anti-service. It expressly recognizes social services as important, compassionate, and essential. But it also says that long-term solutions require dispersed placement throughout the Anchorage Bowl. AM 295-2026 moves in the opposite direction.

### **2. Fairview has already borne disproportionate public-service impacts.**

Fairview has hosted facilities and secondary impacts that serve the entire city. Adding another behavioral health and substance-use navigation hub in the same neighborhood compounds an inequity the Assembly has already identified.

### **3. Equity requires citywide responsibility.**

Behavioral health and substance-use recovery are Anchorage-wide needs. Placing additional

facilities in Fairview sends the message that lower-income and more diverse neighborhoods should absorb the externalities of services needed by the whole city.

**4. Historical context heightens the equity concern.**

Fairview and Eastchester Flats were shaped by housing discrimination, racial exclusion, urban renewal, and infrastructure decisions that fragmented community life. Continuing to concentrate high-impact public services there risks repeating a pattern in which politically and economically marginalized neighborhoods are asked to carry burdens for the broader municipality.

**5. The Assembly can support the service without supporting this location.**

A no vote on AM 295-2026 is not a vote against recovery, behavioral health care, or True North's work. It is instead a vote for a more equitable siting policy and for consistency with the Assembly's adopted direction.