

Municipality of Anchorage



*P.O. Box 390
Girdwood, Alaska 99587
<http://www.muni.org/gbos>*

David Bronson, Mayor

*GIRDWOOD VALLEY SERVICE AREA BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Briana Sullivan and Jennifer Wingard, Co-Chairs
Mike Edgington, Amanda Sassi, Guy Wade*

October 24, 2023

Attn: Anchorage Housing and Homelessness Committee Members
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Travis Turner travis.turner@anchorageak.gov

Re: GBOS Housing & Homelessness response

The Girdwood Board of Supervisors supports the overall principals in the draft position statement for District 6 and appreciates the recommendation that each council submit their own position statements as well. We thank the Anchorage Assembly for this opportunity to describe Girdwood's unique challenges and both the current and planned work by our community to assist our unhoused population.

In last February's "point in time" survey, Girdwood had over 20 unhoused households, and the expectation is that the next survey will show at least double that number, to over 50 households including more children than ever before. Unlike other neighborhoods in Anchorage, Girdwood has no empty structures that could be converted to housing, and housing vouchers can't be used at the majority of available rentals, given local rents and other considerations. There is also no public transportation to Anchorage to access services, and there is no longer a contractor taking Medicaid ride vouchers. Despite these challenges, the community has worked hard to help as much as possible.

Girdwood has a network of organizations working to meet the needs of the community:

- The Girdwood Health Clinic coordinates with the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness and connects clients with services and housing throughout the Kenai Peninsula, as far away as Homer.
- The non-profit organization, Turnagain Community Services (TCS) has dispersed over \$20,000 in rental assistance this year, helped 2 families move out of vehicles and into permanent housing, and helped 2 families avoid eviction, all of which was done with private funds. TCS also operates a food bank which has had over 2,200 client visits this year, an average of 229 per month.
- TCS and volunteers from various area churches have been driving people into Anchorage to meet social service workers at the Loussac Library and to other appointments in town, filling in for the lack of any public transportation between Girdwood and Anchorage.
- In the spring 2023 Municipal election, GVSA voters approved power for Housing and Economic Stability, allowing the service area more local control in funding potential housing solutions.
- In May 2023, GBOS formed the Girdwood Housing and Economic Committee (GHEC) to research immediate ways to make housing more affordable and alleviate our housing crisis. The GHEC is working on several proposals and is expected to propose other ideas in the coming year. One current proposal aims to reduce local building costs by sourcing gravel and storing ex-fill locally. The other proposal aims to establish a site with services for campers and RVs on a temporary basis.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Wingard

Jennifer Wingard
GBOS Co-Chair & Land Use Supervisor

Mike Edgington

Mike Edgington
Housing and Economic Development Supervisor