

Stranded: A Community Conversation on Transit & Housing

Co-hosted by Anchorage Housing Club and the YWCA Alaska



At **Anchorage Housing Club** we believe that Anchorage can become a community where everyone thrives. We actively influence housing and transportation policy by mobilizing Anchorage residents who share our vision of human-centric transportation and abundant, quality housing.

The **mission** of the YWCA is to Eliminate Racism, Empower Women, and Promote Peace, Justice, Freedom, and Dignity for all.

Event Snapshot

43 Anchorage community members gathered for the conversation.

Residents were from **neighborhoods across Anchorage** including: Spenard, Rogers Park, Turnagain, South Anchorage, North Star, South Addition, East Anchorage, Airport Heights, College Village, Abbott Loop, Independence Park, Fairview, and Scenic Foothills.

Attendees agreed that **improvements** are needed to Anchorage's **transit system**.

Everyone agreed that investment is needed in **housing, transit, and infrastructure** to protect pedestrian safety.



Community Conversation at a Glance

On October 2, Anchorage Housing Club and YWCA co-hosted a community conversation on transit and housing. Over 40 community members and organizational staff gathered to discuss **barriers to mobility** within Anchorage, neighborhood **walkability**, improving **access to transit and housing**, and **envisioning an ideal neighborhood**.

Key Highlights

1. Residents **love Anchorage** and want to be **connected** across neighborhoods.
2. The **transit system** needs to be more **accessible** and **affordable**.
3. **Safety** and **walkability** need to be prioritized through **improvements** and **maintenance** of **pedestrian infrastructure**.

What our neighbors say Anchorage can do to improve transit and housing access:

**“Create a survivable space!
To walk & then to wait at
a bus stop is exceptionally
vulnerable & unpleasant.
More route connects and
bus shelters and lights
would help safety.”**

- SOUTH ADDITION RESIDENT

**“Sales tax for affordable,
healthy, safe, beautiful
housing and lower stigma for
transportation alternatives
by teaching kids to ride &
tourists using buses, increase
funding, increase frequency/
routes, free buses for all.”**

- DEB, EAST ANCHORAGE RESIDENT

Discussion & Prompts

What barriers do you or folks in your community currently face in accessing public transportation or getting around Anchorage?

Bus routes

- **Lack of transit connection** makes bus travel **significantly longer** than by car.
- Many bus stops are **unsheltered**, not **climate controlled**, and **not safe** or comfortable to wait at for the bus in **winter**.
- **Multilane roads** and even **chain linked fences** physically **block residents** from reaching bus stops.

Transit costs

- **Charging fair per ride** without a connect places **financial burden on transit riders**.
- Attendees highlighted specifically the **financial barriers for Anchor Riders**.

Pedestrian safety

- **Rolled curbs** encourage cars to park on the sidewalk, leaving little space for **pedestrians**, **especially pedestrians using mobility aids like power wheelchairs**.
- Attendees note a **stigma towards pedestrians** that contributes to an unsafe, **adversarial relationship with drivers**.

Would you consider your neighborhood walkable?

Some attendees responded **yes** and some **no**. Commonalities across responses emerged with those who responded yes reporting **proximity** to schools, parks, and businesses and **well-maintained sidewalks**.

Those who responded no reported **unsafe** speed limits, **poorly maintained**, and **unplowed sidewalks** in the wintertime, and **low density or sprawling areas**.

Others shared that their **residential areas are walkable**, but **sidewalks disappear in commercial areas**.

Some reported yes but with **no nearby destinations to walk to**.



Discussion & Prompts

What is one thing you think the city could do to improve access to transit and housing?

“Build smaller & higher density housing units in more locations along existing transit routes.”

– Cassandra R., College Village resident

“Devote more state and muni resources to sidewalks”

– Doug, Turnagain resident

“Fund urban planning.”

– Scenic Foothills resident

“What about a call button for help?”

(regarding bus stops) – anonymous

“Greater density and mixed-use”

– Spenard resident

“Better organization of the transit system in Anchorage. The city needs more direct routes between hubs which will make the commute shorter for every passenger.”

– Ava, Huffman resident

“Better funding for bus system and housing improve access to buses.”

– Lizzie N., Abbott Loop/
Independence Park resident

“1. Buses that run later with heating stations at bus stops. 2. Buses are currently limited to only a small area. Expand and allow the buses to go further into areas like South, Dimond, and Valley areas.”

– Jennifer S., Muldoon

How Transit Supportive Development can improve access to transit and housing:

Residents identified that **higher density housing, mixed-use development, and more connected transit lines** would improve the city, and their ability to **access transit and housing**.

Transit Supportive Development can help achieve this by **changing design standards to allow for more units to be built more densely, allowing for mixed-use development in neighborhoods, and allowing this development throughout the city along transit corridors**.

Transit Supportive Development aligns with the goals stated in the **Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan**, specifically the following:

Goal 3. Mixed-use, walkable commercial centers and corridors thrive within their neighborhood context, offer housing affordable to a range of incomes, and enable business growth.

Goal 4. Anchorage’s neighborhoods provide a range of places to live, meeting the housing needs of residents at all income levels, household sizes, interests, ages, abilities, and races and ethnicities.

What does your ideal neighborhood look like?
Get creative and descriptive!



“Sidewalks, lots of different types of housing, walkable from housing to businesses (cafes, groceries, pharmacy, restaurants) accessible bus stops, mixed use buildings, safe bike lanes, walkable to schools, lots of crosswalks.”

– Cassandra, R., College Village resident

“Separated bike and pedestrian paths; more green spaces & plants along sidewalks; way more crosswalks (don't necessarily need lights, can have right of way signs); More mixed-use residential areas, with businesses close by that people can walk to; bus stops with overhead shelter, benches, trashcans, etc.”

– Sharika E., Airport Heights resident

“Restaurants, cafes, and grocery store within walking distance (walking on sidewalk, trails etc. that are plowed in winter and wheelchair accessible). Green space, park, easy access to transit that can take you downtown, to trails, and other neighborhoods. Free public third spaces that are used by all.”

- Erin, Spenard resident

“Plants, trees, safe & wide sidewalks, mixed-use buildings, services! busing/transport, library, plowing, color, art, community garden, and events.”

- North Star resident

Ideal neighborhood characteristics:

Equitable & Accessible

Walkable with well-maintained pedestrian infrastructure

Affordable housing and transportation

Sheltered bus stops with heaters and trashcans

Frequent bus routes that run at night and on holidays

Connective & Vibrant

Trails connecting all neighborhoods

Buses to the Mat-Su valley,
Eagle River, Girdwood, and
trails outside the city

Beautiful, colorful art, and murals

Mixed-use residential and commercial areas that are walkable to small businesses and third spaces

Parks, green spaces, community gardens

**“Every person having
healthcare, food, and
housing. Period.”**

- Lucien, Fairview resident

Call to Action

Anchorage Housing Club and the **YWCA** call on the Anchorage Assembly and Mayor LaFrance to take the following actions that are in alignment with the goals stated in the [Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan](#):

- **Prioritize** the perspectives of **all** Anchorage residents across the municipality when making zoning and development decisions, especially those most adversely affected by the city's housing shortage, including *renters, low-income residents, housing-unstable residents, climate refugees, and internally displaced persons*.
- **Goal 4:** Anchorage's neighborhoods provide a range of places to live, meeting the *housing* needs of residents at all income levels, household sizes, interests, ages, abilities, and races and ethnicities.
- **Authorize** mixed-use development in neighborhoods across Anchorage and enable changes to design standards including 0' setbacks, smaller lot sizes and increased building heights that allow for denser housing development.
- **Goal 3:** Mixed-use, walkable commercial centers and corridors thrive within their neighborhood context, offer housing affordable to a range of incomes, and enable business growth.
- **Invest** in equitable transit funding models that are not solely contingent on ridership fees.
- **Goal 6:** Anchorage coordinates transportation and land use to provide safe, efficient, and affordable travel choices.
- **Maintain** vibrant green spaces and increase trail connectivity across the municipality and beyond the Anchorage Bowl.
- **Goal 8:** Anchorage maintains, improves, and strategically expands parks, greenbelts, and trail corridors to enhance land values, public access, neighborhoods, and mixed-use centers.

