



Anchorage Assembly



INTRODUCTION

Now more than ever, the Anchorage Assembly must focus on the basics: ensuring public safety, building back the economy and addressing homelessness. The ongoing impacts of the coronavirus have made this work even more important. Every corner of our city has been significantly impacted. The Assembly is continuously evolving to ensure that we are equipped to serve our constituents properly and with safety at the forefront. Accountability for the work we've committed to is priority. Below, you will find the Assembly's first comprehensive update. As always, please feel free to reach out to all Anchorage Assembly members at wwmas@muni.org.



COMMUNICATIONS

The Assembly has created a Communications Subcommittee in response to increased public interest in recent events and government updates. The subcommittee's focus is on ensuring transparent and timely communications to our constituents and to spearhead the implementation of short-term and long-term goals. Leaders of this subcommittee include Assembly Members Meg Zaletel, Christopher Constant and John Weddleton.

Short-term Goals

- Hire a full-time Public Engagement Officer or bring on a communications firm to do this work.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

- Create an autoresponder for wwmas email address that contains individuals district information contacts and refers to the member's information page.

☐ Not Started ☐ In Progress ☒ **Completed**

- Circulate "What's Ahead," a list of future Assembly meetings, as well as Assembly agendas via the Federation of Community Councils (FCC) and publish them on the Clerk's social media channels.

☐ Not Started ☐ In Progress ☒ **Completed**

- Utilize FCC email lists as a form of public communication and outreach.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

Long-term Goals

- Work on an overhaul of the Assembly website to focus on public ease of access to information, i.e. a public portal that provides residents with a tool to select topics of interest and receive notifications of meeting dates, agendas, minutes and other records as they become available.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

- Create an electronic method for providing public notice to community councils, applicants, and the public at large.

☒ **Not Started** ☐ In Progress ☐ Completed



HOMELESSNESS

COVID-19 has forced social service agencies as well as the Municipality to become more creative with how we tackle homelessness. The summer and fall of 2020 brought with it the opening of the Sullivan Arena as a mass shelter, the purchase of a variety of buildings to increase shelter and transitional housing, the Home for Good Project coming online, and more. We have a unique opportunity to make real strides to address the ongoing issues of homelessness within the Municipality.

The Assembly and the Committee on Homelessness's role in this project is to convene, lead in the context of public policy, and leverage local, state and federal funding.

Short-term Goals

- Formal engagement with the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness by having an Assembly member on their board.

☐ Not Started ☐ In Progress ☒ **Completed**

- Better coordinate efforts to communicate and educate community members concerned about homelessness.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

- Find tangible ways community members can engage and assist the Municipality and the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness in our efforts.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

- Increase funding for the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

Long-term Goals

- Compile and analyze housing data and craft policy to assist in filling housing gaps.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

- Engage in a holistic approach with all Anchored Home partners in regard to data strategies.

☒ **Not Started** ☐ In Progress ☐ Completed

- Identify solutions to mental health and substance misuse issues.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

- Analyze and fund the creation of a day center.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

Accountability Measures

We must ensure the public is confident in our efforts and trusts the public process moving forward. Our accountability to the public is of utmost importance.

How we'll be accountable:

- Reduction in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness:
 - There was a drop in August, but this could also be due to late data entry and some missing data, given that many new housing options were not yet using our data system. Demand for affordable housing is going up with new homelessness but supply (new affordable housing) is not necessarily going up.
- Reduction in the number of individuals who come back into homelessness:
 - The number of individuals who come back into homelessness continues to fluctuate.

Month	OLD INCORRECT NUMBERS	CORRECT # of people housed	12/18/20 # of people housed
Jan-20	54	106	109
Feb-20	32	84	99
Mar-20	30	83	89
Apr-20	38	112	115
May-20	45	111	119
Jun-20	53	107	118
Jul-20	36	83	90
Aug-20	28	66	75
Sep-20			68
Oct-20			127
Total	316		



QUALITY OF LIFE

The global health pandemic has greatly affected the quality of life for residents throughout the Municipality. As we recover, we must focus on ensuring a return to normalcy so our residents can continue to enjoy our world-class trails, parks, cultural centers and many other amenities our city has to offer.

To move forward on this goal, we must explore some lingering questions:

- How many people are leaving the Municipality?
 - There is no data available for actual 2020 population changes yet.
- Why are people leaving?
 - Most residents report leaving due to the cost of living compared to the Mat-Su Borough.

- Is Anchorage affordable? Why or why not?
 - According to the Cost of Living Index national survey of 266 cities in all 50 states, Anchorage ranks as the 22nd most expensive city in the survey. The cost of living in Anchorage was 24% higher than the cost of living in an average city in the U.S.
- Can residents find housing that fits their needs?
 - The single-family housing market is in an extreme seller's market with very low available inventory and very high demand from prospective buyers. The rental market, on the other hand, has seen a reduction in demand that has caused rent to decline modestly since 2016, while the vacancy rate increased.
- Given the many categories that pertain to quality of life, what does Anchorage do well? Where are the gaps?
 - The Assembly has not engaged with this question yet and will need to do so in the near future.

Unlike many of our other priority areas, the role of the Assembly is to converse, facilitate discussion and, most importantly, enact policy solutions. The comprehensive plan, land use and other plans, including work done by the organization involved in the "Live. Work. Play." campaign inform and lead our efforts.

Short-term Goals

- Align and staff Municipal Boards and Commissions to focus on quality of life issues.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

- Create overarching Commission on Quality of Life, which would provide guidance to Assembly and Municipality.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

- Focus on community safety and health.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

Long-term Goals

- Increase public transit and multi-modal options to include South Anchorage and Eagle River.

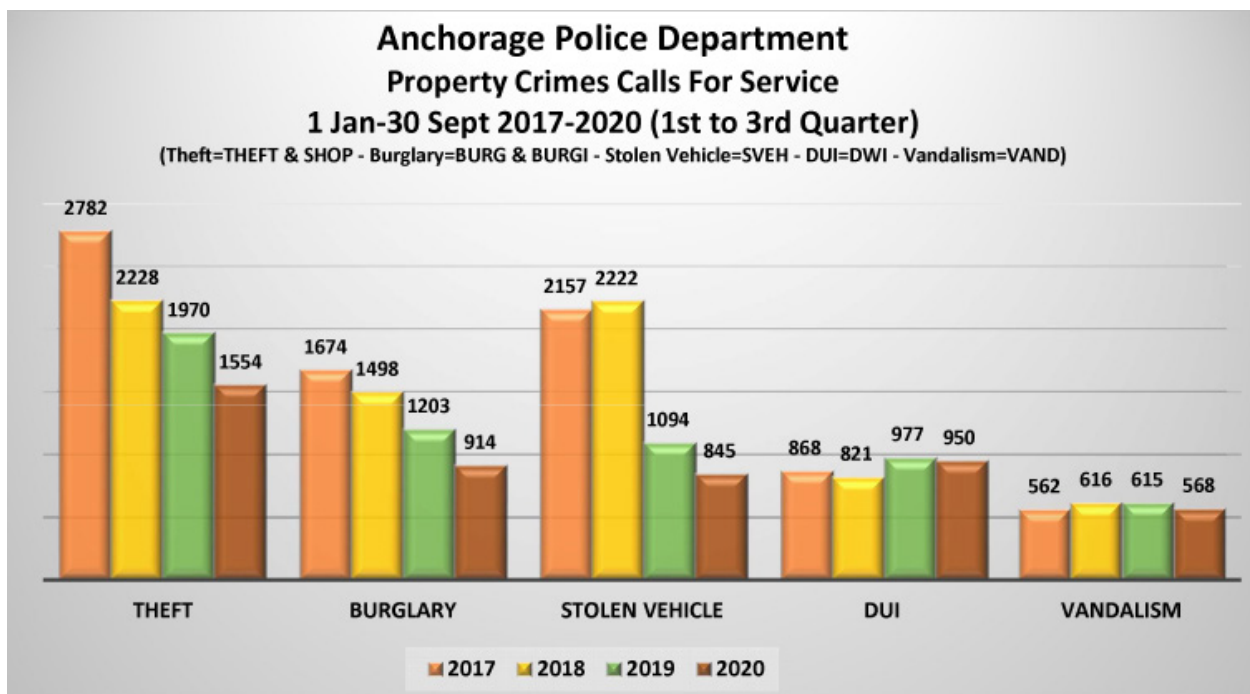
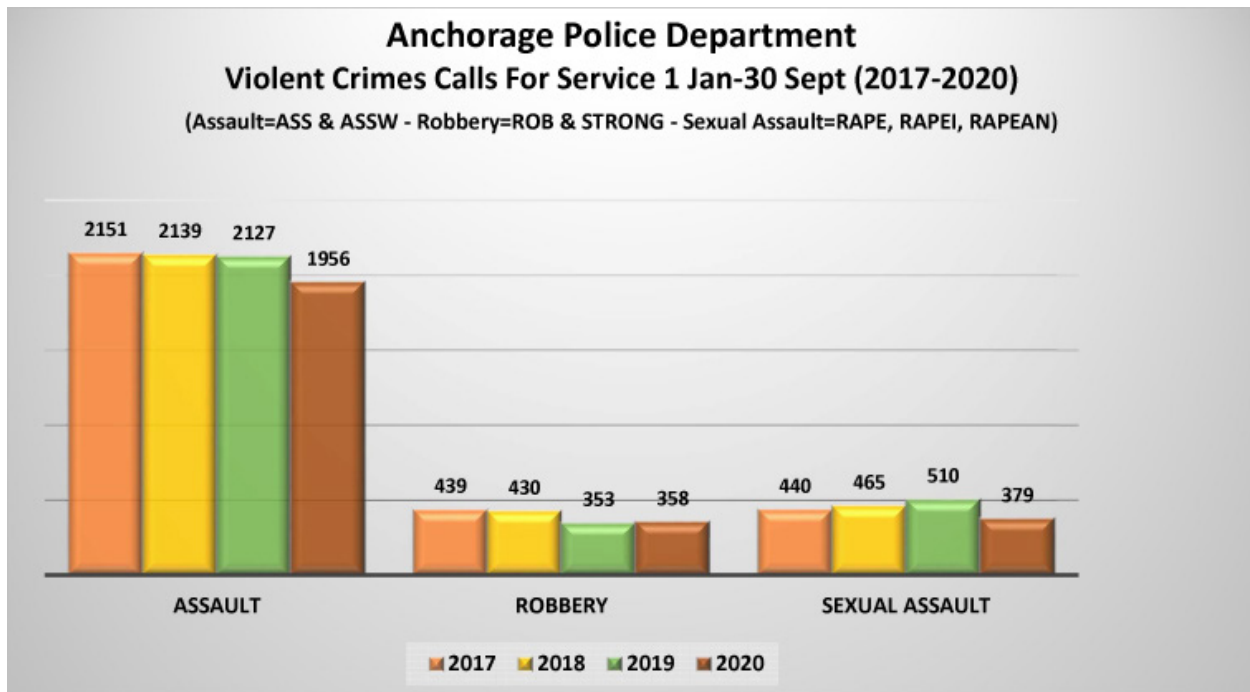
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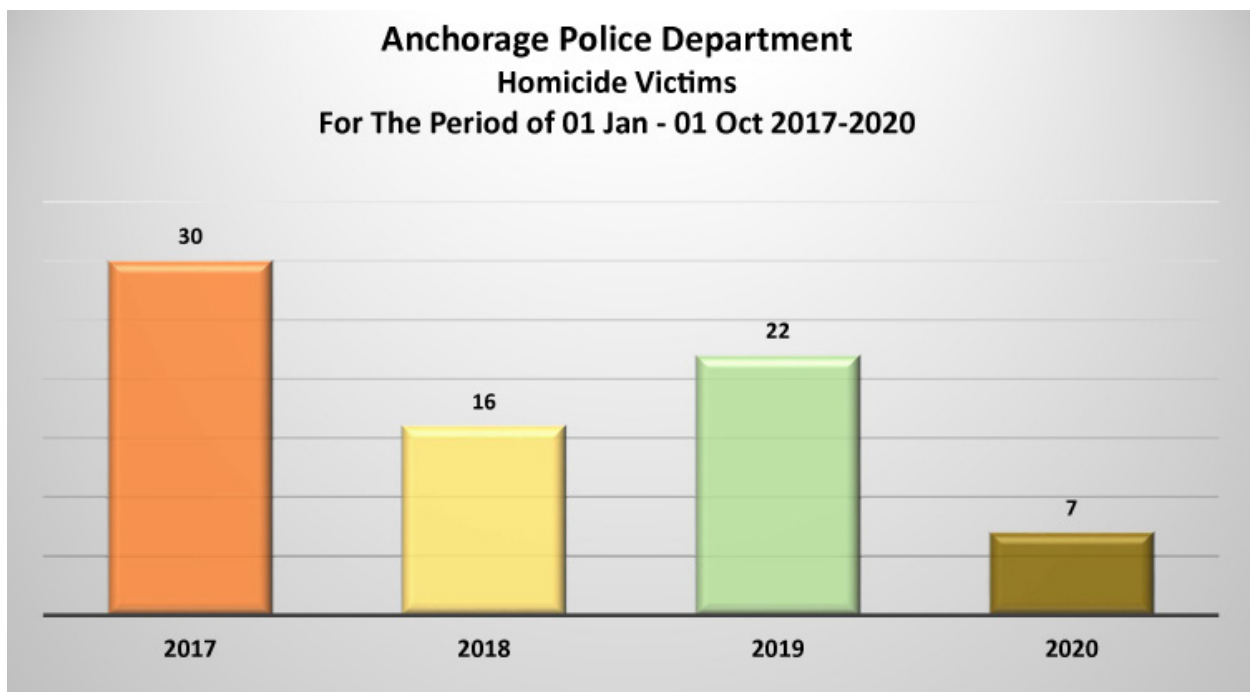
- Increase amenities identified as key factors in quality of life (parks, trails, art, etc.)

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

The Municipality of Anchorage plays a key factor in ensuring our quality of life and holds itself accountable to the following measures:

- Is crime going down?
 - Assault, sexual assault, theft, burglary, stolen vehicle, DUI, vandalism and homicide have all decreased.





- Is public transit expanding?
 - Ridership isn't expanding because of rider limits in place, meaning that no more than 14 people can be on a 40-foot bus at a time and only six people on a 22-foot bus. People Mover is operating with about 50% fewer riders than the previous year. The good news is that People Mover virtually eliminated service in April and May and ridership has rebounded to meet capacity since. Ridership won't grow until the capacity limits are raised and its safe to do so.
 - Beginning Wednesday, September 9th, current AnchorRIDES-eligible customers may begin scheduling grocery orders from participating stores to be delivered to their home by AnchorRIDES. Non-senior customers age 59 and younger, will have a required delivery charge of \$3.50/core service area delivery and \$5.50/premium service area delivery. Deliveries to seniors 60 and older are grant funded by the State of Alaska's Department of Health and Human Services and donations in any amount are appreciated, but not required.
- Are people able to find the right type of housing for their needs?
 - We have 30 affordable units for every 100 extremely low-income households, so significant portions of our renter population are not able to find the right type of housing to meet their needs. On the purchasing end, housing inventory and time on the market are low right now.
- Are young families staying in the Municipality of Anchorage?
 - With fewer kids enrolled in our schools, our median age rising to 34, and a clear out migration of adults to the lower 48, families with kids are moving in greater numbers out of Anchorage.



PUBLIC SAFETY

The Assembly has a clear mission when it comes to the safety of residents in the Municipality. We must continue to support our first responders and public health professionals while addressing the gaps in our non-sworn staffing and in treatment programs for substance misuse and mental health. This will need to be done while also working to reduce violent crimes in our city.

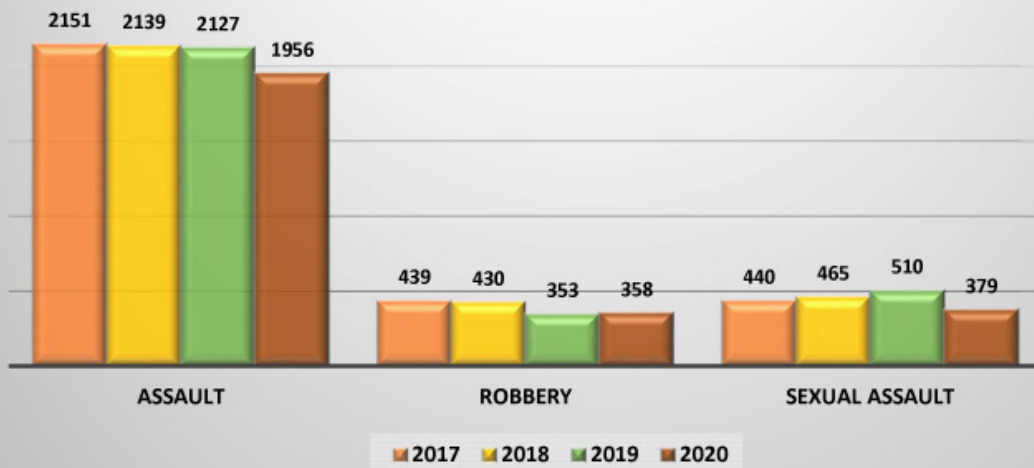
Alcohol Tax

In April, voters approved a proposed 5% alcohol tax, which should raise \$12 to \$13 million annually. As written in the ballot proposition, this tax must be used for matters of public health and safety. This tax presents an opportunity to move beyond our current systems and focus on important preventative work. The Assembly will be engaging in a thorough public process to discuss the possible use of this tax. This process began in May, will continue through September, and will include committee meetings, worksessions, and town halls. To learn more about this process, please visit the Assembly website.

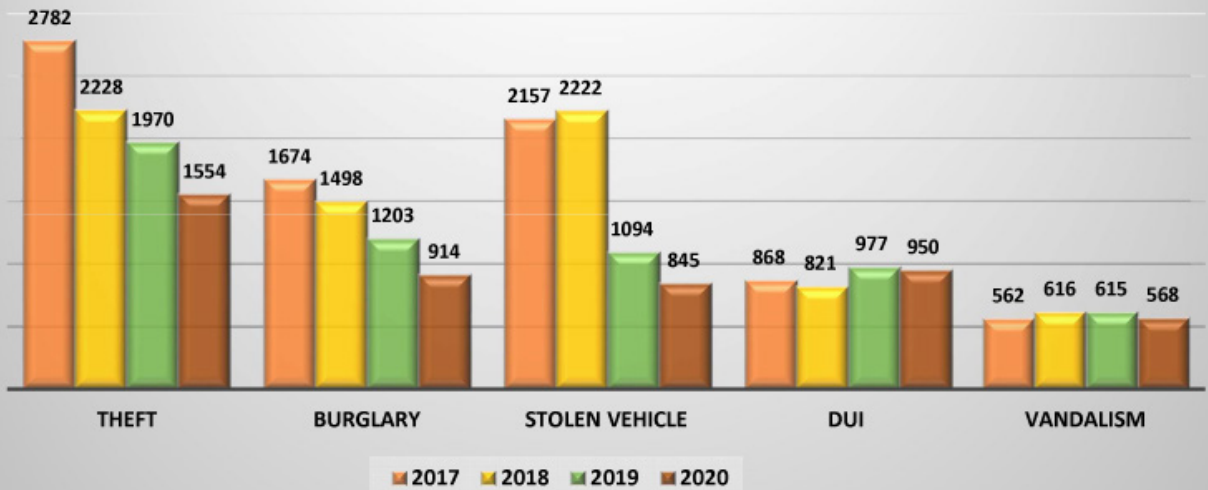
Lingering Questions

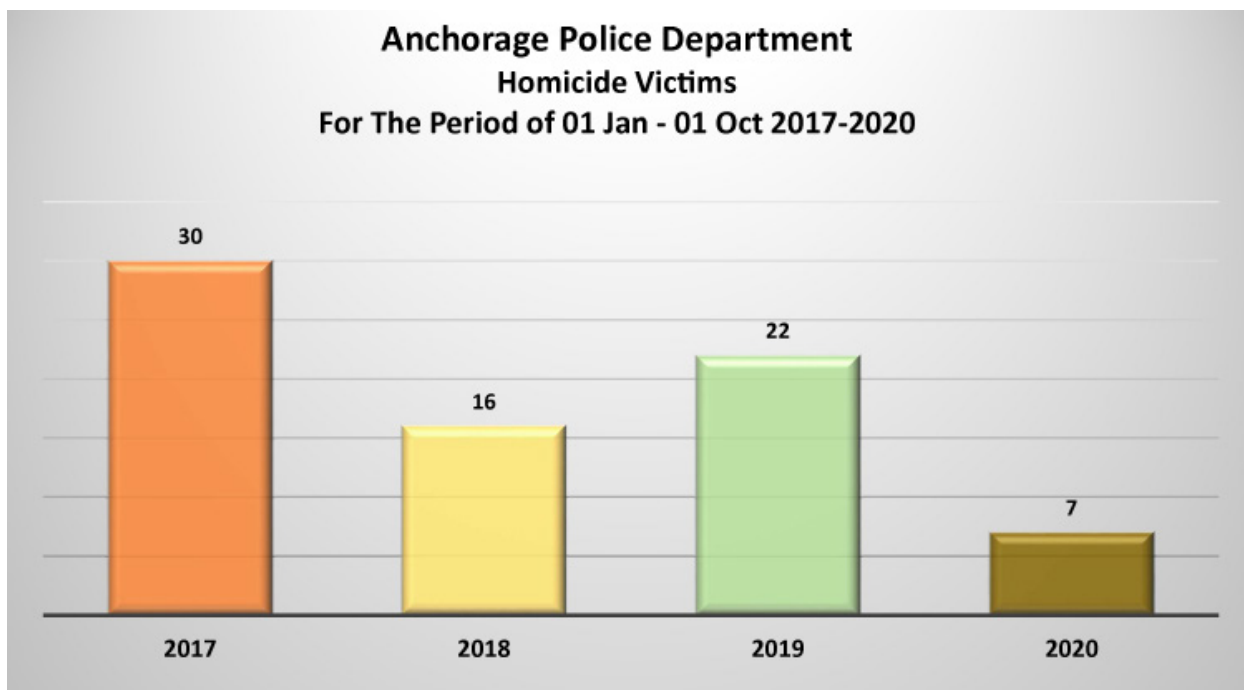
- What is the gap in our non-sworn staff?
 - The APD could use 6 more employees in the 911 Center to eliminate the use of over time for normal operations, 2 IT technicians as the Department continues to increasingly rely on technology and one more position in our crime lab to ensure we are able to process fingerprint evidence in a timely manner.
- Are any specific crime patterns on the rise?
 - According to the information provided by the Anchorage Police Department, there are no significant increases in crime patterns.
- Are any specific crime patterns on the decline?
 - Assault, sexual assault, theft, burglary, stolen vehicles, DUIs, vandalism, and homicide have all seen a recent decline.

Anchorage Police Department **Violent Crimes Calls For Service 1 Jan-30 Sept (2017-2020)** (Assault=ASS & ASSW - Robbery=ROB & STRONG - Sexual Assault=RAPE, RAPEI, RAPEAN)



Anchorage Police Department **Property Crimes Calls For Service** **1 Jan-30 Sept 2017-2020 (1st to 3rd Quarter)** (Theft=THEFT & SHOP - Burglary=BURG & BURGI - Stolen Vehicle=SVEH - DUI=DWI - Vandalism=VAND)





Short-term Goals

- Increase the number of dispatchers to allow for shorter 911 and 311 call times.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

- Conduct public perception polls to better understand feelings on public safety.

☒ **Not Started** ☐ In Progress ☐ Completed

- Explore gaps in prosecution and other non-sworn staff.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

Long-term Goals

- Encourage and foster consistent community use of public spaces as a way of increasing safety.

☒ **Not Started** ☐ In Progress ☐ Completed

- Continue to support police and fire academies to right-size our first responders.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

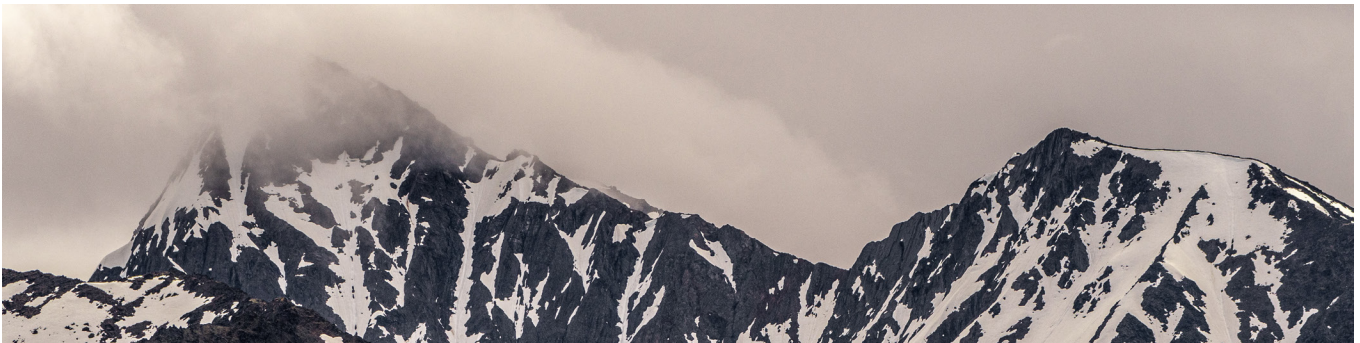
- Consider solutions to mental health and substance misuse issues.

☐ Not Started ☒ In Progress ☐ Completed

The Assembly will be accountable to the people through the reporting of metrics and data provided by our public safety and public health professionals.

How we'll be accountable:

- Reduction in violent crime
- Fewer preventable accidents
- Reduction in property crime
- More follow up on crime reports
- Shorter call times on 311 and 911
- Perception of public safety improves – people feel safer
- Reduction in pedestrian/bicyclist accidents



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Municipality plays a key role in the level of economic development in the Municipality of Anchorage. The Assembly will work to identify barriers, enact policies to foster an opportunity-rich and more equitable playing field, and encourage local development and business creation.

To continue work in this area, the Assembly should explore a few key questions:

- Are new businesses opening? How many businesses are closing? Why or why not?
 - There are businesses opening. According to the Opportunity Insights Economic Tracker tool, 37.8% of small businesses in Alaska that were open in January 2020 are now closed as of September 13, 2020. In general, new businesses are always opening and existing businesses are always closing. Currently, it is likely that many more businesses are closing than opening in Anchorage given the current economic conditions created by COVID-19.

- Are there enough opportunities for training and education to ensure local youth are prepared to enter and compete in the market after graduating high school/trade school/college?
 - Access to post-secondary training is often a function of whether it is affordable and available. As we see the University scale back due to lack of state support, there is concern about our ability to supply a future workforce in Alaska. Trade education is another important part of the job market equation. For the next few years, we could see an equilibrium develop as trade industries with older workers experience retirements within the workforce. This will allow the industries to both expand and recruit easily because there may not be a great deal of construction happening.

Short-term Goals

- Focus appropriate and limited website revamp resources on business and development frequently used sites.

☐ Not Started ☐ In Progress ☒ **Completed**

- Explore barriers to economic well-being of small and large businesses.

☐ Not Started ☒ **In Progress** ☐ Completed

Long-term Goals

- Convene discussions surrounding roadblocks to development and implement suggestions.

☒ **Not Started** ☐ In Progress ☐ Completed

- Total revamp of website and move to e-services.

☒ **Not Started** ☐ In Progress ☐ Completed