

TimeStamp**Text**

Dear Asheville City Council,

I am a native North Carolinian and have lived in Asheville for 22 years. For the last few years, I have noticed a more measured response and distancing from panhandlers both downtown and riding around in my car. I understand a need for public safety as relates to aggressive panhandling. I have not experienced this and feel the ordinances currently in place are effective. I am opposed to criminalizing motorist donations. I suggest we proceed more carefully and slowly while assessing and prioritizing what matters most as relates to our community and panhandling. Some research suggests that panhandling regulations may actually increase the problem and that to restrict panhandling can divert the need for basic necessities into theft, scavenging and more varied/focused public safety issues. This issue needs more transparency and community involvement through open forums, meetings, etc.. Thank you for your service, time and consideration.

8/20/2023 5:47:00 PM

Sincerely,
Dr. Pamela J. Culp, M.D.
Hello,

I write to you as a concerned Asheville community member, to request that you please abandon the proposed Panhandling Ordinance. I see and understand that this Panhandling Ordinance is presented in terms of safety for folks who panhandle (who are engaging in this way of seeking assistance for their own survival) - it is dangerous for them to be where they are in major traffic areas. I implore you not to criminalize the behavior in an effort to curtail it. These are folks who obviously cannot afford legal fees, and arresting folks for engaging in behavior that is seeking help is inhumane. Instead of spending money on fining/incarcerating folks who want assistance in order to exist, please spend that money (and time and energy) on addressing the root causes of their Panhandling behavior.

8/21/2023 1:11:00 PM

Please abandon this inhumane ordinance and design and support programming that helps these folks achieve self-sufficiency. Please put your energy and resources into solving the housing crisis, and addressing the lack of accessible public transportation, the lack of jobs with livable wages in Asheville, the achievement & opportunity gap in our schools, and the need for better public infrastructure.

Thank you for your time.
Jody Escaravage
Asheville Community Member

To the members of the Asheville City Council,

I am a resident of Buncombe County, and I'm a teacher and a working musician in the City of Asheville. It has been brought to my attention that this week's agenda contains the introduction of an ordinance restricting solicitation or panhandling with harsher enforcement.

8/21/2023 4:59:00 PM

I would ask you to reflect upon the actual purpose of this ordinance. Does it improve the health of our city or does it effectively hide or obscure the struggles of people experiencing homelessness in our community? Does it further the alienation of an afflicted segment of our community from the general population? Does it shift our attitudes from empathy to fear? I would argue that it does, and that there are better approaches for our city to take that get to the true root of the issue. Perhaps funds that would be expended in the enforcement of this ordinance would be better spent toward programs of support for those on the street. Asheville is poised to be a leader in real and sustainable programs to reverse our trend of homelessness.

I appreciate your work, and hope that you will deny or shelf this ordinance in hopes of a better approach.

Thank you,
Thomas Kozak

Dear City Council,

For the record, the general planning of the proposed First Baptist Church project is a big boost for Asheville with two exceptions:

8/21/2023 9:51:00 PM

1) A twenty story hotel building will interfere with the look of the city landscape. It must be scaled down to 1/3 that size, Asheville is currently on the cusp of being far too over built with hotel rooms.

2) The 2,000 parking spots is overkill. Instead Create more green space with trees to invite a prettier landscape and places people can relax and enjoy.

Catherine Cole
Home, Farm and Business Owner
Asheville, NC

Hi Mayor and Council,

It's disturbing to look at the 1 Oak Street project mockups with a 'slanted' view. Aerial mockups that look mainly straight down with 10-15 degrees angle doesn't tell Asheville citizens what to expect they will end up living with as to a giant hotel up to 300 rooms on an edge of downtown already impacted by old (Renaissance) and newer hotels cutting off the Sky View.

Our Sky View is a key to what makes Asheville, Asheville.

Everyone needs to see this project with ground level mockups from several points of the compass and from different Downtown / Central Asheville street corners.

I am trying to review the Christmas 2022 Water Crisis / COA Water Distribution Infrastructure Upgrade program management presentation and matrix. The idea of some future state where a digital SCADA dashboard explains things like what valves are open, closed, or partially open and to what degree is something that will take time.

8/21/2023 10:25:00 PM

In the next 90 days the Water Department needs to do 'make do' version where the maintenance teams track the state of the valves with a simple app that pinpoints the valve as best possible with Google Map, gives each one a distinct code, and records what the valve state is.

That's easy. I suggest Podio:

<https://podio.com>

A more detailed assessment will only be enhanced as current water teams detail the state of as many valves as possible.

That should have already been happening since January. Is that the case?

Thanks,

Grant Millin, Strategy Innovator

To members of council,

I'm terribly disappointed about the staff time, energy and focus that has gone into moving this solicitation ordinance forward.

I'm saddened by the language criminalizing "begging" and the callousness that must have gone into proposing, drafting and supporting a document targeting those with the greatest need in our community. This seems to have more to do with fragility and discomfort around the visibility of poverty than actually doing anything to solve it.

I'm especially discouraged that the punishment for such "crimes" would be misdemeanors with associated fines - meaning our vulnerable neighbors and community members who are already experiencing financial hardship, could be burdened by an additional financial strain and even potential jail time for asking for help in a time of need.

I carry cash on purpose, so I'll have something to give if someone asks. At times, I've kept socks, toilet paper, water and crackers in my car in case I pass someone in need. It's hard not to feel patronized by an ordinance like this - I'll give what I want to who I choose. How can the city say who is or is not a mutual acquaintance when we are all neighbors?

8/22/2023 2:29:00 AM

The people who voted for each of you sent you here to address very real problems - not to create new ones. Poverty is a problem, people not having their needs met is a problem. This ordinance would ask overburdened staff to implement and enforce it. It would further criminalize our most vulnerable residents and further isolate them from resources and support.

The city of Asheville has said both that it is not a homelessness service provider and that it has a goal to END homelessness. I don't know how to reconcile those two things but I can tell you that an ordinance like this only creates new problems, without getting to the root cause of anything.

I ask you to scrap this, move on and get to doing the real work of public safety which I believe is bigger and more wholistic than this tiny piece of the puzzle. Please vote no on this ordinance.

Emma Hutchens Nguyen

P.s. I'm submitting public comment via email because council meetings, in council chambers without space for distancing, mask requirements or allowance for participation by phone leaves those of us who are at most risk for severe illness or who take care of those with higher COVID risks without safe access to meetings. With cases rising again in Buncombe county, I watch every meeting from home.

Hi there.

I think it's great that there's a desire to build affordable housing in downtown Asheville. I agree it's much needed and if there's a means, land-wise, to accomplish that, let's do it in a considerate fashion.

At the same time, those of us who have known Asheville since before it's revitalization, would also like to keep Asheville from having a big city feel, which includes too many tall buildings that drown out the views for those of us on the ground floor.

Also, do we really need another hotel? Yes, tourism is hot. However, it's also been down over 10% year over year, according to items I read in July/early August. I would want the city to consider that before we add more hotel rooms, we prioritize the citizens who already serve the tourism industry and can't afford to live near their work.

8/22/2023 6:04:00 AM

Another item of importance is trees. The trees of the Blue Ridge and Smoky mountains are one of the area's life blood. I would ask that city council have stricter requirements - especially for large developments like this - to preserve and even add to our local tree population. Again, the goal being to preserve nature and the views that have long made, and still make, people want to visit and live in the region and, specifically, in the city.

To sum up, I would ask the developer for revisions that help keep a small city feel alive for all those who come to visit or live.

Thank you.

Change is the only constant,

--

Alexis Cole

Hello councilors,

My name is Andy Paul and I live on State Street. Please approve the conditional rezoning for Project Aspire. Mixed use density is just what downtown needs, and this project will add ample homes to the area. (If anything, it should be taller!)

8/22/2023 11:17:00 AM

It's past time we had a connected network of bike lanes downtown too. With more density, new residents will appreciate alternatives to car travel that are more sustainable and contribute less to congestion.

Sent from mobile

Members of Asheville City Council,

I am an Asheville resident, a person of faith, and a senior adult who has served as a volunteer with the Winter Safe Shelter program, Through our local news, I have become aware of a proposed ordinance which would criminalize seeking - and giving - financial assistance to neighbors in need. While I recognize that panhandling on street corners is an issue of concern, the solution is not punishment of the simple instinct to ask for or offer help. The gap between those who enjoy the comforts of hearth and home and those without a place to lay their heads continues to grow, and those of us with the power to make change need to focus our attention and actions on creating a society where living wage jobs, affordable housing, accessible public transportation, and quality public education, healthcare, and public services are available to all members of the human family, especially those who merely seek recognition of their humanity .

8/22/2023 12:52:00 PM

When one person suffers, we all suffer. The remedy to curb panhandling is not to wield a 'big stick'. Panhandling is a symptom of a much more serious societal ailment, the inequality that continues to grow and to harm us all. Let us work together to heal and uplift our neighbors in need, not judge and condemn them. Please reject this misguided ordinance.

with gratitude for your service,

The Rev. Alexandra S. Lusak
54 Ravencroft Lane
Asheville, NC 28803