

COUNCILWOMAN ANN  
**O'BRIEN**



**PHOENIX DISTRICT 1**



*PROPOSED*

**HOMELESS SOLUTIONS**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>03</b>	<b>INTRO</b>
<b>03</b>	<b>CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS</b>
<b>06</b>	<b>WHAT WE'VE DONE</b>
<b>06</b>	<b>LIMITATIONS</b>
<b>07</b>	<b>GOALS</b>
<b>08</b>	<b>LAWS, ORDINANCES, CODES &amp; POLICIES</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>CITY &amp; NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGIES</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>HOUSING &amp; SHELTER</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</b>
<b>31</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>

First and foremost, homelessness is a real problem impacting us ALL! Communities, all over, are dealing with the effects of homelessness. For some, their city parks are unusable. For others, their streets are filled with encampments. Homelessness is a real issue in society which is created by multiple factors compounding on each other to create situations where individuals find themselves in a problematic environment that is often hard to recover from. As an elected official and a representative of city government, it is my responsibility to identify possible solutions which may be utilized in a strategic manner to help folks get back on the road to being productive citizens.

My office researched the origins, impacts, and possible solutions of homelessness for over a year. We have met with non-profits, government agencies from across the country, private sector providers, and religious institutions to identify a myriad of solutions. I do not pretend to think that what I am proposing in this plan is the end all be all – homelessness is a complex problem which requires multifaceted solutions. I do however believe that what is included in my plan involves proven solutions used in other government agencies from across the Country.

Included in the plan are possible solutions I believe the Phoenix should explore related to affordable housing, workforce development, and partnerships to treat mental illness. We can also take proactive steps to prevent the homeless populations from growing by working smartly to create new city and neighborhood strategies, and by forming new intergovernmental agreements and creating new city ordinances. By partnering and advocating with resources already available at the County, State, and Federal level, we can work to create new programs, initiatives, and where needed create new laws and cut existing red tape.

We did not get here overnight, and the solutions I propose will not create an overnight solution. It will probably get worse before it gets better. However, I believe, with the right combination of services and tough love, we will create a new environment where people will want to seek the services we provide and are made aware of the different options available to them. Through these proposed solutions, I believe we will return our parks to places families take their children to play, street corners no longer covered in trash and debris, and sidewalks community members feel safe to ride their bikes down. Whether through such programs as Community Court or by fully staffing and expanding our Community Assistance Program, we will return to an environment where crime is treated like crime and mental illness and addiction receive the services they need.

I want to thank my staff and every entity we encountered over the last year. The insight gained from learning best practices and what has not worked in the past is invaluable. To every nonprofit CEO who reached out, to every Councilmember from a neighboring community or state that was cornered by my staff at conferences, to every private sector leader who we met with, to every religious leader willing to open your network of services, THANK YOU! Through collaboration I believe we will make a positive impact on the homeless crisis.

Thank you,



Ann O'Brien  
District 1 Councilwoman



Homelessness is a complex issue with no simple solutions. However, it is important to understand the factors that contribute to the crisis in order to develop effective solutions. The homelessness crisis in Phoenix is the culmination of several factors, including an increase in rental prices, addiction, and mental illness; Phoenix is further constrained by various court cases and rulings. However, Phoenix is well prepared to continue the work that has already begun and implement additional solutions and priorities to aid those who are homeless while enforcing our laws and maintaining a safe and clean city.

## HISTORY

Over the last couple of years, Maricopa County has seen a dramatic rise in homelessness, with Phoenix bearing the brunt of this increase. Despite having approximately 37% of the regional population, Phoenix has over 71% of the homeless population in the region. Of the 4,908 **unsheltered** individuals in Maricopa County, 3,333 were in Phoenix, and of the 4,734 **sheltered** individuals, 3,569 resided in Phoenix; the combined total of those numbers can be seen in Figure 1. Based on the regional figures, the number of homeless individuals in Maricopa County began steadily rising starting in 2017. In 2017, the total number of homeless individuals both sheltered and unsheltered was 5,605; as of January 2023, that number stood at 9,642. Throughout the entire growth of the homeless crisis, Phoenix has consistently taken on a larger portion of the homeless population relative to its size in the region.

Number of Homeless Individuals, 2019-2023

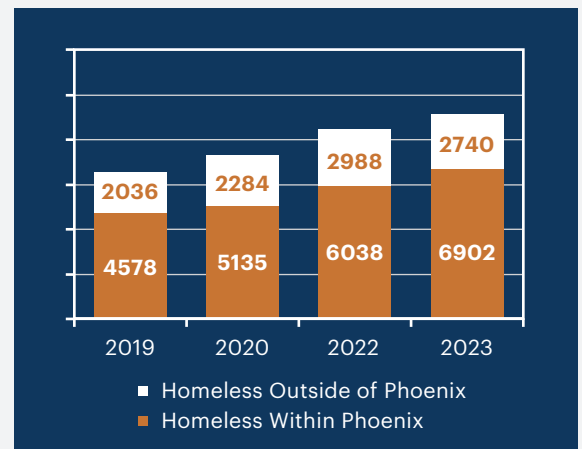


Figure 1 - Source: Maricopa Regional Continuum of Care PIT Count, 2019-2023  
 \*The Point In Time (PIT) Count was not conducted in 2021 due to the pandemic



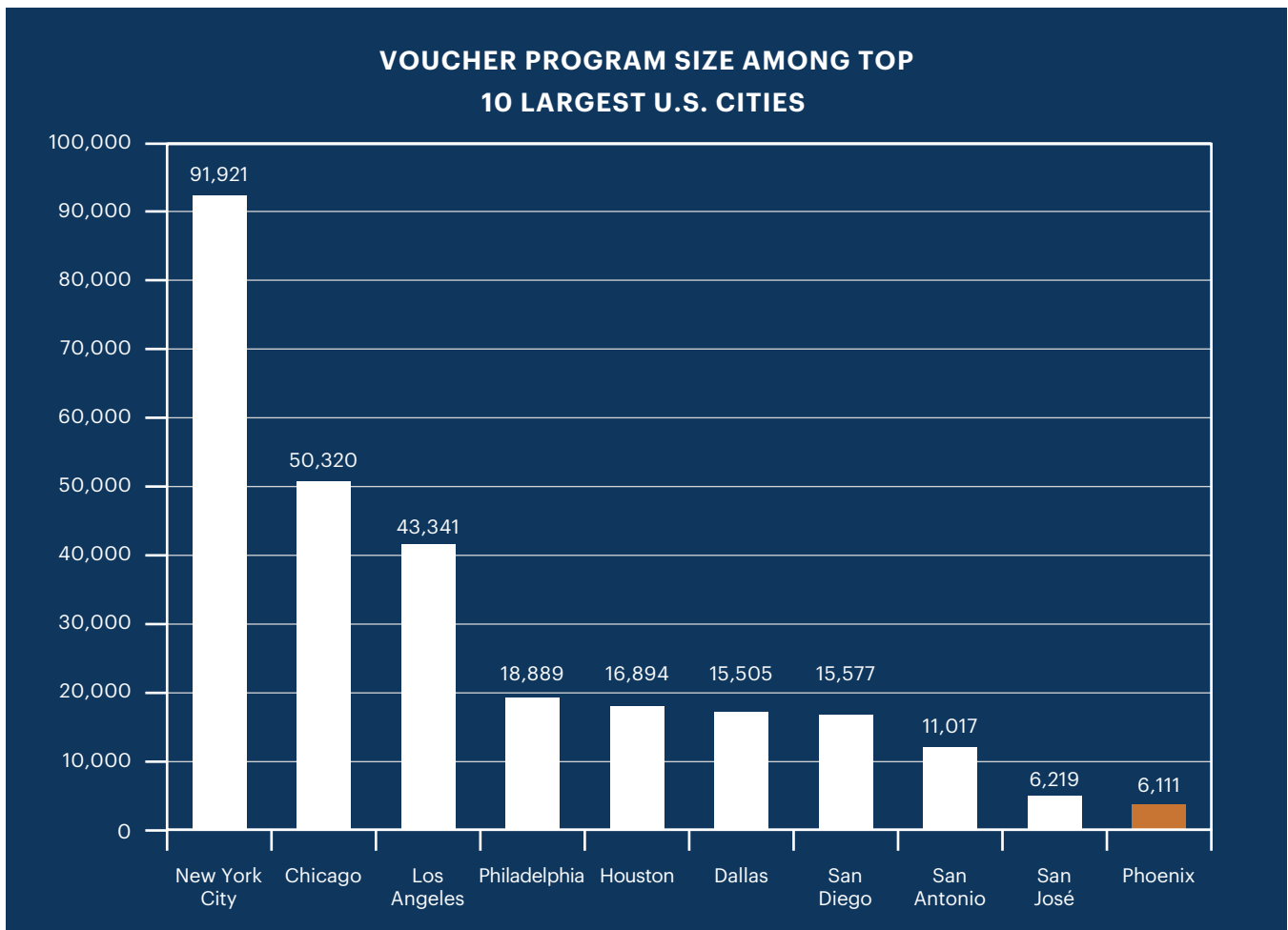
## CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

### ✓ COST OF LIVING/HOUSING

One major contributor to the increase in homelessness has been the significant increase in rent prices over the last decade, which has decreased attainable housing for many low-income households. While multiple factors can be attributed to increased rent prices, including population growth, higher interest rates and housing shortages, the result is an increased demand for rental units, which has increased the cost of living for many individuals. **Since 2010**, the number of available units under **\$1,000** has decreased from approximately **90%** of all rental units in the Phoenix region, to under **10%** of all units. This has resulted in a **68%** increase in rental prices **since 2017**; the median rent in Phoenix is now over **\$1,600**. While many households can stretch their budgets and dedicate a greater portion of their income to rental costs, there are still those who are unable to afford the increased rental prices.



One tool that has been used to help those who are struggling to afford rental prices has been Housing Choice Vouchers (commonly known as Section 8), but this has its limitations as well. The primary issue facing Phoenix is that, despite being the fifth largest city in the nation, we receive significantly fewer vouchers than we should be getting relative to our size. Even though Phoenix has a population just slightly higher than Philadelphia, we receive over 12,000 fewer vouchers than they do. The graph in Figure 2 shows that Phoenix receives the fewest vouchers of the 10 largest cities in the country, despite having more residents than all but four other cities.



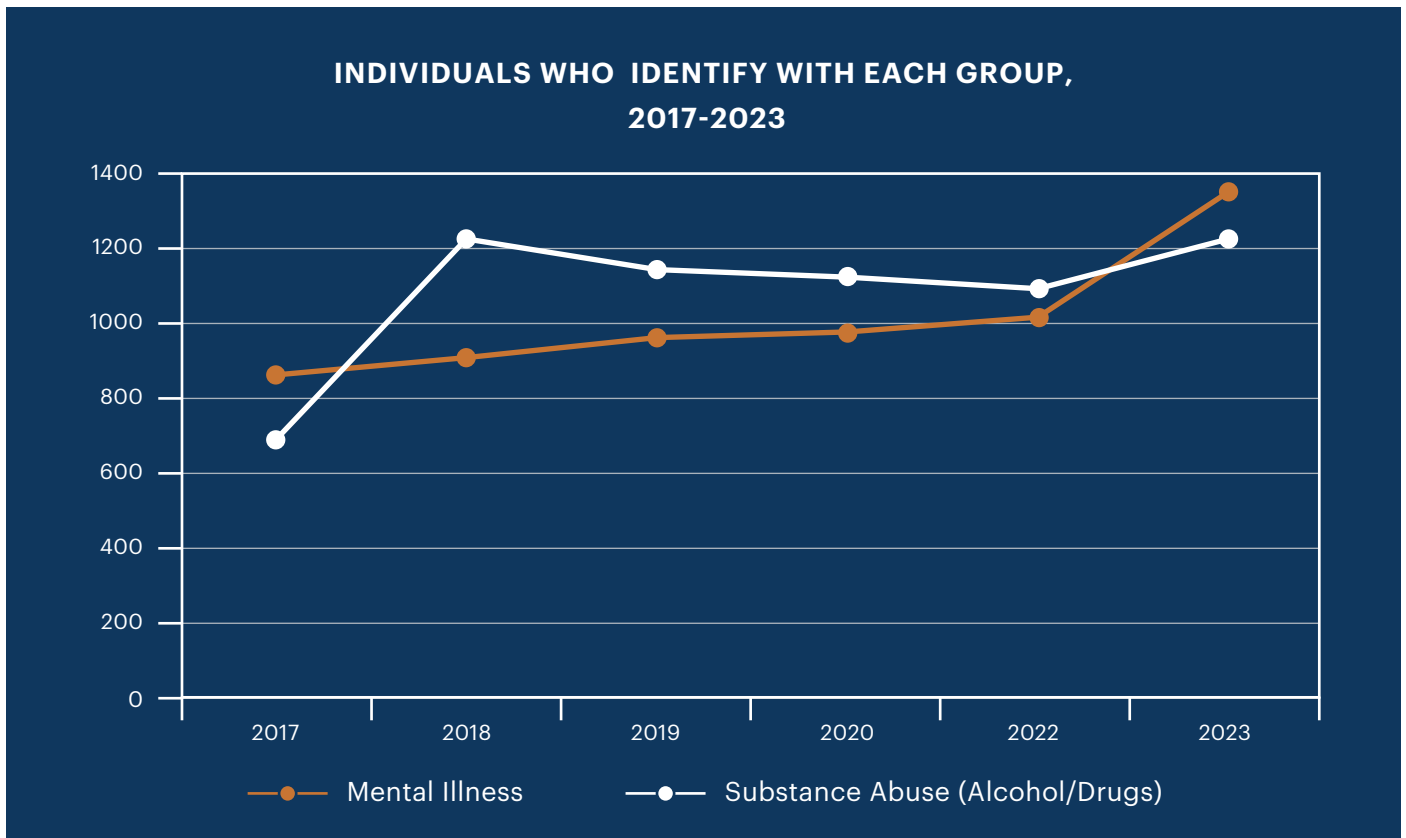
■ Figure 2 - Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development • Data as of April 2022

## ✔ DRUGS & MENTAL ILLNESS

Another major contributor to homeless in Phoenix has been addiction and substance abuse. To be clear, not all homeless individuals use drugs or have addictions. However, homelessness may lead to the development of addiction and drug use, or compound substance use issues in those already struggling with addiction. Drug use in and of itself leads to many challenges for those who are homeless. Addiction may make it difficult for individuals to access treatment resources, stay connected with their support systems, and access stable employment and health care. Furthermore, many homeless shelters and programs have strict rules against drug use, which deters many suffering with addiction from seeking shelter and treatment options. One key component is the rise in fentanyl use that has been seen both locally and nationally. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 50 to 100 times stronger than heroin and morphine, making it incredibly addictive and dangerous. Fentanyl is so dangerous that overdose deaths from Fentanyl increased from 13% of all overdose deaths in Arizona to over 65% of all overdose deaths by April 2021. With the prevalence of Fentanyl and other drugs on our streets, it is easier for a homeless

individual to be susceptible to these dangerous and inhibiting substances.

Like addiction, another major factor in the homeless crisis in Phoenix has been untreated mental illness. As with addiction, not all homeless individuals have a mental illness or develop a mental illness. However, untreated mental illness may lead individuals to become homeless or make it more difficult for individuals to get out of homelessness. When suffering from mental illness, it can become more difficult to understand or accept the various services and programs available. Further, it can be difficult for an individual to hold steady employment or retain stable housing without properly treating their mental illness. Without having the proper resources and engagement for individuals with behavioral health needs, it becomes more difficult to lift those with severe mental illness out of homelessness. The rise of both Addiction and Mental Illness in the homeless community can be seen in the chart in Figure 3.



■ Figure 3 - Source: Maricopa Regional Continuum of Care Point In Time (PIT) Count, 2019-2023

■ The Point In Time (PIT) Count was not conducted in 2021 due to the pandemic



## WHAT WE'VE DONE

Since 2021, the City of Phoenix dedicated over \$140 million to homeless solutions, with the implementation of those solutions continuing into 2024. Some of this funding includes 592 shelter beds added in 2022, with 800 additional shelter beds coming online over the next two years. Phoenix has further expanded our contracts with various outreach service providers and invested more into our Community Action Response Engagement Services (CARES) program, a coordinated response to homelessness. In 2022, the City of Phoenix engaged 710 individuals through the CARES team offering services and shelter for at least the night. Even with these historic and significant investments, there is still quite a way to go to adequately address this crisis.



## LIMITATIONS

Phoenix is also caught between various court rulings from multiple sides. The most impactful court decision is *Martin v. Boise*, a lawsuit brought by homeless individuals against the City of Boise, ID. In the 2018 case ruling, the Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit ruled cities cannot enforce anti-camping ordinances against homeless individuals if no alternatives to camping exist. When the Supreme Court of the United States declined to hear Boise's appeal to this case, the ruling invalidating anti-camping ordinances was upheld and now applies to the entire 9th Circuit, including Arizona. While there are different interpretations of this ruling, the only constraint explicitly placed on municipalities is anti-camping ordinances cannot be enforced against homeless individuals when insufficient bed space or other shelter alternatives are not immediately available. At no point does this ruling prevent the enforcement of laws related to other illegal activity, such as drug use, public urination and defecation, theft, assault, etc.

Additionally, Phoenix is caught between dueling local lawsuits with two significantly different rulings. One of those was when the ACLU sued Phoenix in November 2022, which resulted in a federal judge ordering the City in December 2022 to stop enforcing camping and sleeping bans against unsheltered people as long as there are not enough shelter beds available and to stop seizing unsheltered people's belongings without prior notice, until a sufficient policy to protect the property and rights of homeless individuals was enacted. Since this ruling, the City implemented a policy to keep the property of homeless individuals safeguarded and gives sufficient storage options to ensure items remain safe. The other lawsuit facing the City was brought forward by the residents and business owners in and near "The Zone", in which the judge found that the City stopped enforcing many laws in the area; this resulted in a ruling that ordered the City to begin clearing out the multiblock encampment.

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## GOALS

We recognize that the homeless crisis is a complex issue resulting from various issues and outside factors, and we acknowledge the constraints we face moving forward. Knowing this, the City of Phoenix needs to begin implementing solutions to address both the short- and long-term demands homelessness presents. We as a City can lead with services while still enforcing our laws and stopping illegal activity. We can address drug use, addiction, and other debilitating circumstances while still treating individuals with dignity and respect. We can implement best practices and new ideas while also ensuring our current programs and policies continue. Every citizen deserves to be safe in their neighborhoods, and every resident deserves the opportunity and the resources to help lift themselves out of homelessness.

It is our obligation as a City to provide both!



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## LAWS, ORDINANCES, CODES & POLICIES

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Laws, city ordinances, codes, and policies are tools governments use to maintain a high quality of life, promote public safety, and increase resources toward certain programs, municipalities, and problems. These are needed to prevent unwanted behaviors, discourage individuals from engaging in illegal activities, and keep residents from experiencing harmful actions. There are often frequent interactions between homeless individuals and the legal system, due to laws that either directly address homelessness or indirectly affect the homeless. This provides the opportunity for those crafting these legislative initiatives to create impactful rules and regulations to ensure public spaces promote healthy activity, cleanliness, and improved livelihoods while deterring actions and behaviors that negatively affect communities.

The ability to craft policies, laws, and other regulations is a positive tool governments should wield with specific intentions to improve the lives of those within their jurisdictions. The City of Phoenix must take a close look at what can be done to promote safe and healthy living throughout the city. Simultaneously, Phoenix needs to balance the concerns of neighborhoods and communities, residents who deal with negative behaviors frequently, and address the needs of homeless individuals as they have interactions with law enforcement and the legal system. Addressing these multiple concerns and issues can be done through thoughtful consideration and the use of the tools available to policymakers across agencies and governments.

### ✓ COMMUNITY COURT

When looking at places where a significant number of homeless individuals interact with the government, a place often overlooked is the judicial system. Homeless individuals are often cited for misdemeanor crimes, such as trespassing, vandalism, minor shoplifting, and other low-level crimes. After being arrested or cited for these offenses homeless individuals will usually cycle through jail and the courts then end up right back at the area where they first committed the crime. This leads to individuals getting stuck in a cycle of offense, arrest, jail, release, and repeat causing public safety and legal resources to be diverted to address this cycle and clogs our jails with homeless individuals. To combat this, Phoenix must implement a Community Court to provide services and help elevate those who are homeless from a cycle of recidivism and chronic homelessness. This pre-adjudicated court will help connect a portion of the homeless population with services, more effectively reach service-resistant individuals, and empower individuals to take accountability for their lives and make positive changes towards stability.

First started in the City of Mesa, community court is a program that aims to get homeless offenders connected with services, put on a treatment plan, and eventually into housing and employment. This court is voluntary, and individuals may choose to exit at any time and pursue their charges through the standard legal system or forgo the court altogether and head straight into traditional courts. The process begins when an individual who committed a misdemeanor is identified as homeless by a navigator in the jail system. Before their court date, service providers will meet and develop a plan for success tailored to each specific individual's circumstances and needs, and this is turned into a court "directive". All directives require an individual to check in weekly with their navigators to help address any needs the individual may have. From there, the public defender and the navigator will meet with each participant to go over their rights under the law, explain the community court process, and develop attainable goals or tasks within their directives to complete by the next court date. Successive court dates are used to check in, monitor and note

progress in completing the directives and the plan including setting new goals to be achieved. Individuals who wish to no longer complete the plan or refuse to make progress may be moved back into regular court and follow the traditional legal pathway.

The goal of the court is to see improvement in the lives of individuals and, hopefully, help them reach a point of stability, sobriety (if applicable), and into stable housing. "Graduation" or program completion is recommended by all involved parties, the public defender, the navigator, and the prosecutor, if the individual completes their specific set of goals in their plan. After a small ceremony is held celebrating the individual's completion, the court will dismiss all charges and waive all possible fines, both past and present. The dismissal and waiving of charges and fees are done to help the individual who completed the program have an easier time maintaining their newfound stability, and to remove any roadblocks in obtaining housing or employment.

The Mesa program has seen tremendous success getting service-resistant individuals to accept assistance as opposed to post-conviction treatment programs. Providing people the ability to get their charges completely dismissed has been a better motivator for individuals to become empowered and accountable for themselves. The City of Mesa has seen many positive results following the implementation of their Community Court in 2018. In their first year, Mesa saw "a \$200,000 decrease in defense attorney costs, 1,000 fewer cases assigned to traditional courts, and a decrease in jail costs, arrest rates, and fire department calls for assistance. In one case, there was a participant who had 29 fire department calls, 26 police department calls, and 24 medical transports to the hospital, totaling around \$43,200. After their participation in Community Court, the calls went down to almost zero." Community Court can support homeless individuals, connect people to services, help the City of Phoenix enforce the law, and make forward progress in tackling the homeless crisis.

## ✓ **DEVELOP AND TEST EFFECTIVE WAYS TO CONDUCT FENTANYL FIELD TESTING**

When Phoenix police officers are in the field, they frequently encounter illegal and dangerous amounts of illicit drugs, including meth, heroin, and PCP, among other substances. When encountering most of these substances Phoenix officers use state-of-the-art technology to test the substances in the field to determine the substance. This immediate result allows the officer to process the arrest of the person with this substance more efficiently, and it is easier to show the court system why this person, with these substances, should get the specific sentences and bonds the city or county are recommending. The one caveat to this is when an officer encounters Fentanyl, an incredibly addictive and dangerous drug. Fentanyl is commonly pressed into acetaminophen (a common over-the-counter pain reliever) and may

only compromise around 2% of the pill. This small percentage is enough to get an individual high, but also small enough that our current equipment usually cannot detect it. This requires our officers to bag the suspected substances, send them to our crime lab, and await the results of the more in-depth analysis, which at times can take up to a few weeks. Phoenix should research and conduct validation studies on devices and equipment that can be used to accurately test for Fentanyl in the field. Fentanyl field testing will enable Phoenix to petition the courts more appropriately and efficiently and allow the city to definitively say the substance is without a doubt Fentanyl.

## ✔ **IMPLEMENT AN ORDINANCE TO DEVELOP A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CITY-OWNED PROPERTIES**

Currently, there is not a clear, uniform response written in the city code or policy giving guidance to city staff on how to handle incidents of encampments or transient activities on city property. There is training available to some employees, and other departments implemented their own ways to properly address these situations. Having a single, cohesive policy to address any incidents allows for consistency in how public-facing employees and departments address events. While there may need to be some written differences for certain departments and employees who have more specialized interactions with homeless individuals, overall, the city can provide clear and consistent messaging to public-facing employees. This would also entail developing a code of conduct for those using or visiting the facilities, and defining what is and is not acceptable behavior on city property.

## ✔ **IMPLEMENT AN ORDINANCE REQUIRING BUSINESSES TO IMPLEMENT CART CONTROL AND CONTAINMENT MEASURES**

Shopping carts, often stolen and used to transport belongings far from their place of origin, can frequently be seen strewn on the side of the road, left in washes, or otherwise abandoned and discarded. This increases costs for businesses who must continuously retrieve or replace these carts and raise the amount the city must spend to assist in cart retrieval. When faced with a similar issue, the City of Los Angeles implemented a city ordinance to require on-site shopping cart containment systems for stores that provide six or more shopping carts. These systems can be electronic wheel locking, in-store use only, or other methods for containment. To reduce the number of shopping carts stolen and used against their intended purpose, the City of Phoenix should implement an ordinance requiring all establishments that provide shopping carts for use by patrons to have an onsite containment system.

## ✔ **IMPLEMENT AN ORDINANCE BANNING CAMPING WITHIN AT LEAST 500 FEET OF ALL SCHOOLS AND DAYCARES**

When students are walking to school or parents are dropping their kids at daycare, there is the potential for danger when walking by an encampment, especially if an individual is using drugs. When faced with this issue, the City of Los Angeles implemented an ordinance that banned camping within 500 feet of schools and daycares within city limits. This was done to ensure school children are not faced with hazards, such as exposure to drugs and smoke from encampment fires. In order to ensure children and families can safely play outside on their school fields and walk to class, Phoenix needs to implement a similar ordinance to ban encampments within 500 feet of all schools and daycares within city limits.

## ✓ **ADVOCATE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE LAW TO ALLOW YOUTH AT RISK OF OR ARE ALREADY HOMELESS TO SIGN UP FOR HOMELESS SERVICES**

When trying to exit homelessness, signing up for programs and services with dedicated providers is a crucial step to being able to regain stability. For homeless youth attempting to access many services, this can be a surprisingly difficult step in and of itself. Many service providers require parental or guardian consent before they can work with a homeless minor, due to legal requirements. For homeless youth who are not in contact or cannot rely on their parent or guardian, this often leaves them unable to access services, meaning they must wait until they are old enough to no longer need the parental signoff or seek emancipation. This can leave homeless or at-risk youth vulnerable, increasing the risk they have of becoming chronically homeless or being lured into sex trafficking. Given the seriousness of this issue, Phoenix should advocate and support State laws that allow minors to access and sign up for services and programs, if they are at risk of becoming or are already homeless. Connecting individuals to services, especially minor children, is critical in preventing homelessness and maintaining a good quality of life.

## ✓ **ADVOCATE FOR THE CREATION OF A STATE LAW REQUIRING MUNICIPALITIES TO DEVELOP ADEQUATE SHELTER CAPACITY BASED ON THEIR POPULATION LEVEL**

When evaluating the homeless crisis across the State, nearly every municipality in Arizona with a sizable population does NOT have adequate shelter capacity for a homeless community that is proportional to its population. This means cities with larger shelter capacities or more services, such as Phoenix, become a hub for homeless individuals from other municipalities. This puts a significant stress on the existing services and shelter capacity offered to homeless Phoenixians and can increase the wait time for service delivery and available bed space. To combat this issue, Phoenix should help advocate for and support a State law that requires municipalities over a set population to provide adequate shelter capacity, based on their population levels.

## ✓ **ADVOCATE FOR THE CREATION OF A STATE LAW TO BAN PANHANDLING IN THE MEDIAN OF ROADWAYS**

Panhandling is the act of begging for money in a public forum, typically seen on the side of roadways and medians. Historically governments have been unable to completely ban the practice, as the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that this is a constitutional right protected by the First Amendment. However, governments may limit the practice by excluding it from specific places, especially areas that pose a safety or health hazard. There are areas in which panhandling is a danger to all involved, and that is in medians and on the roadway along freeway exits. This can increase the likelihood of accidents and injuries and puts pedestrians, drivers, and homeless individuals in situations of increased danger. Phoenix should support the creation of a statewide panhandling law that prohibits panhandling on the median and in the roadway.



## INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENTS (IGA'S)

### ✓ **ENTER AN IGA WITH THE STATE AND MARICOPA COUNTY TO REQUIRE FACILITIES WITH VULNERABLE POPULATIONS TO DEVELOP EXIT PLANS TO ENSURE INDIVIDUALS ARE NOT HOMELESS WHEN THEY EXIT THE FACILITY**

Time and time again, there are stories of individuals who are vulnerable to homelessness exiting facilities like prisons, jails, hospitals, and foster or group homes and walk out on the street with no plan to become housed or employed. It is not uncommon to hear that these individuals are exiting without necessary documents such as an ID and/or social security card. This makes it incredibly challenging for these individuals to find stability, housing, and employment – and increases the likelihood that these individuals end up or remain homeless. To or remain prevent this from continuing to happen, Phoenix must enter an IGA with the State, Maricopa County, and other municipalities and relevant agencies to provide navigation and support services to individuals prior to exiting jail, prisons, foster homes, group homes, and other places that house populations susceptible to homelessness. Phoenix can work in tandem with these organizations and non-profits to help supply these services so when someone is graduating, released, or pushed out of a facility, they have a plan and resources to aid them in becoming stable and self-sustaining individuals.

### ✓ **ENTER AN IGA WITH ADOT AND OTHER RELEVANT AGENCIES TO KEEP FREEWAY INTERCHANGES CLEAR OF CAMPING AND CONDUCT WEEKLY CLEANUPS**

Along freeways and interstate roadways, encampments can frequently be seen on, under, and around interchanges, impeding traffic and blocking pedestrians from crossing at interchanges. This can pose a safety and health hazard and necessitates the use of disinfectant and cleanup to make the walkways safe and usable again. It can be difficult to enforce codes and laws in these areas, as interchanges are maintained and typically patrolled by State agencies and as such require coordination between organizations. To efficiently address this, Phoenix needs to bring together multiple agencies and levels of government to create a coordinated response to ensure safety and cleanliness at interchanges. Phoenix, in conjunction with the Arizona Department of Transportation, Phoenix P.D., Arizona Department of Public Safety, and any other relevant agencies should enter an IGA to ensure regular, weekly cleanups and sanitations of interchanges are occurring with regular enforcement from participating law enforcement agencies. Residents should be able to have space to physically walk through interchanges and travel to their destinations without fear for their safety.



# CITY & NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGIES

Homelessness is an issue that touches all corners of Phoenix, and while some communities experience higher rates of homelessness, it is a crisis with citywide ramifications. Given the presence of homelessness throughout the city, Phoenix must have clear consistent policies and practices when dealing with the issue of homelessness. Looking at a more local level, neighborhoods throughout Phoenix see more direct impacts from the homeless crisis. Some concerns that arise include safety and security, blight, and response times from city departments. Ensuring residents receive the support and programs needed to keep their neighborhoods safe and welcoming places to reside is critical in addressing the concerns of communities regarding the homeless crisis.

The issue of homelessness needs to be addressed at both the smaller, neighborhood level and the larger, citywide level. Such a large and widespread crisis requires clear and communicable strategies that address community safety, blight, data, and resources. Implementing strategies that will have direct impacts on neighborhoods can help alleviate some of the effects of homelessness seen in communities while having clear citywide strategies can increase transparency and help address the struggles faced by many experiencing or entering homelessness. Ensuring that actions taken by the City of Phoenix are communicated to residents will show the steps being taken to help elevate individuals out of homelessness, while also being transparent about areas where the city can improve.

## ✓ **BOOST STAFFING LEVELS AT THE CITY OF PHOENIX, WITH EMPHASIS ON DEPARTMENTS THAT DIRECTLY IMPACT THE CITY'S RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS**

As has been widely reported, many city departments are facing higher than normal vacancies, most notably the Police Department. This has led to decreased response times for service calls, maintenance, and other services the city is obligated to provide. To address this, the city has implemented multiple solutions to boost recruitment in key positions, including hiring incentives, creative marketing strategies, and recently a Council-approved compensation increase that applies to all city departments. With these measures in place, Phoenix should now vigorously recruit locally and outside of Phoenix to decrease vacancy rates across the city, with an emphasis on the departments and the roles that directly impact the solutions being implemented to address the homeless crisis. Staffing our departments to appropriate and efficient levels will enable the City of Phoenix to properly staff and service both residents and homeless individuals.

## ✓ **ENGAGE WITH AND ACTIVATE BLOCK WATCHES IN PHOENIX NEIGHBORHOODS**

Block Watches are integral to community safety in many neighborhoods across the City of Phoenix. Block Watches are a program of neighbors watching out for one another by enlisting the active participation of residents in cooperation with Phoenix P.D. to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in the neighborhood or area. Through the program, Block Watch training is provided to participating neighbors who use simple techniques to deter, delay, and detect crime, and report such activity to the appropriate channels. Given Block Watches are the eyes and ears of their local area, Phoenix should

<https://azmag.gov/Portals/0/Homelessness/pathways-home/PH-Toolkit-Community-Court-2022-09-20.pdf>

actively train and engage with Block Watches to help Phoenix residents better understand how to address homeless individuals within their communities. Further, Phoenix should prioritize helping to establish Block Watches in interested neighborhoods to help promote safety and quality of life in more areas.

## ✓ **EXPAND DATA TRANSPARENCY RELATED TO HOMELESS SERVICES AND ENGAGEMENT**

Transparency is a key component to effectively addressing the homeless crisis in Phoenix. This goes beyond communicating the strategies and solutions being implemented to address homelessness and covers the real-time data and results of these efforts. Recently, the Office of Homeless Solutions launched a data dashboard, to provide a high-level overview of key metrics and numbers related to how Phoenix is addressing the homeless crisis. This includes how many people were served by emergency shelters, the number of people rehoused, and the number of individuals who were engaged by outreach programs. To promote further transparency, Phoenix should expand the data shared publicly to include more specific areas of information, examples include locations of outreach performed in a given week or month, the number of individuals who accept or refuse services and shelter, and cumulative totals updated throughout the year to show progress or decline in key areas.

## ✓ **DEVELOP RESOURCE GUIDES FOR INDIVIDUALS BEING EVICTED, ENDURING FINANCIAL INSTABILITY, OR WHO ARE AT RISK OF BEING HOMELESS**

When an individual is going through the eviction process or having a period of financial instability, they are at a greater risk of entering homelessness. During these stressful times, it may be difficult to know what resources are available. To help alleviate some of the unknown, Phoenix needs to develop resource guides to be distributed to those who are in the eviction process. This would include organizations that assist with tenant rights, sources of rental assistance or financial aid, and other organizations that will assist individuals in times of duress. Phoenix needs to also develop distributable resource guides that members of the community can disseminate to neighbors they know are under financial hardship, community members who are facing homelessness, and those who are currently homeless. By providing direct information on what resources and services are available, Phoenix can help connect vulnerable individuals with programs and groups that may help prevent someone from entering homelessness.

## ✓ **ESTABLISH A VACANT PROPERTY REGISTRY TO LOG AND MONITOR VACANT PROPERTIES THROUGHOUT PHOENIX**

Vacant properties are often magnets for trespassing, illegal activity, blight due to lack of maintenance and fires. To combat this, some cities across the country implemented vacant property registries which support code enforcement and blight regulations. Currently under consideration at the City of Phoenix, the vacant property registry would enhance the ability of our Neighborhood Services Department to conduct code enforcement and address blight on abandoned or uninhabited properties. Registration of a property typically occurs when the foreclosure process starts, and the property is

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[https://stories.opengov.com/phoenixaz/published/pxT\\_nkvrN](https://stories.opengov.com/phoenixaz/published/pxT_nkvrN)

removed when the owner notifies Phoenix of a change in occupancy. When registering a property, the property owner would be provided resources and would have the ability to sign documentation to make city code and blight enforcement easier. This would include Authority to Arrest forms, graffiti removal waiver, education on property maintenance, and allow access to offer city services such as Phoenix CARES. Developing an online portal to register and track vacant property will enable Phoenix to properly address the issues that commonly develop because a property is uninhabited.

## ✔ **CONDUCT REGULAR CLEANUPS OF ENCAMPMENT HOT SPOTS**

Encampments, when set up for prolonged periods, can lead to an accumulation of human waste, trash, and debris, all of which can pose a public health hazard to homeless individuals and surrounding communities. To address this, and to ensure communities are kept clean and sanitary, Phoenix should conduct regular cleanups of areas with large, frequent encampments. The rate of cleanups would be determined by the size and scope of the encampment and could range from monthly to weekly. Encampments would be required, with proper advance notice, to temporarily move so that debris and waste can be discarded, and disinfectant can be applied to remove any harmful bacteria that resulted from any accumulation. Ensuring public health hazards are mitigated is an integral step in addressing the safety of homeless individuals and the surrounding communities.

## ✔ **GIVE THE PHOENIX POLICE DEPARTMENT ACCESS TO THE SHELTER SPACE DATA TO PROVIDE REAL-TIME DATA ON BED SPACE AVAILABILITY**

When Phoenix Police officers encounter a homeless individual, they lead with services first – offering to connect individuals with service providers. One thing Phoenix Police officers are unable to do is let a homeless individual know what shelter space is available to that person at that moment. This data is tracked and updated frequently and should be accessible to all employees who engage with the homeless community. To better connect our homeless community with available bed space, Phoenix must also give police officers access to the available shelter space data.

## ✔ **FORM PARTNERSHIPS WITH UTILITY COMPANIES AND THE PHOENIX WATER DEPARTMENT TO PROACTIVELY CONNECT INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE STRUGGLING FINANCIALLY WITH AVAILABLE RESOURCES**

When individuals are struggling financially, and facing homelessness, one of the things they struggle with is paying utility bills. This can include water, electricity, internet, and other necessary services people rely on to survive. Phoenix manages the water bills for city residents, and as such, knows who is falling behind and failing to pay their bills promptly. The city should utilize this information and data to the benefit of the consumer and send resource guides and informational fliers of resources available for those struggling financially. Further, Phoenix should explore the formation of partnerships with regional utility providers, to coordinate identifying those who may be struggling financially, and to send out resource and service information to applicable consumers. This may help individuals proactively connect with and use services to prevent them from entering homelessness.



## ✓ **DEVELOP PLANS TO ACTIVATE PUBLIC PARKS**

Public parks are places to relax, exercise, play, and spend quality time with friends, family, and community. While most people use parks for appropriately, there are times when individuals use public parks inappropriately, such as drug usage and encampments on public amenities. Phoenix should develop a program to study and implement activation tools to encourage safety and promote the appropriate use of parks and their amenities. This can include events such as sports tournaments and farmers markets, to installing safety features such as lighting and improved bathroom facilities. Exploring how to implement these events and features can enable neighborhoods and surrounding communities to safely enjoy their public parks.

## ✓ **CREATE A LIGHTED NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRAM TO INCREASE SAFETY IN NEIGHBORHOODS**

Neighborhood streets on average contain less lighting than public roadways, given the low level of traffic volume. This becomes an issue when neighborhoods feel unsafe at night, as they cannot properly see hazards as they walk in their neighborhood. Whether it is someone working a night shift, an individual returning from a late night out, or a student returning home after a late-night class, all residents deserve to feel safe walking through their neighborhoods. Phoenix needs to develop a program to help install street lighting in neighborhoods that request additional lighting and safety measures. Well-lit areas are known to reduce the chances of crime and deter criminal acts from occurring in the surrounding area while boosting the confidence of nearby residents.

## ✓ **CREATE A LIGHTED ALLEY PROGRAM TO INCREASE SAFETY**

Alleyways, which run behind many homes and businesses in Phoenix, are difficult to monitor and out of sight from most people. This can lead individuals to select alleyways to set up encampments, participate in illegal activity, or leave behind hazardous debris. It is difficult to continuously monitor alleyways, especially at night when it is dark and lighting is minimal at best. This can pose a safety issue for homeowners and business owners who have frequent unwanted activity happening at night – right behind their homes and businesses. To promote safety and visibility, Phoenix needs to develop a Lighted Alley program, which would install low-level, downward facing alley lighting through the entire alleyway. This would allow for increased visibility and deter illegal activity from being conducted in the lighted alley.

## ✓ **RENOVATE BUS STOPS THAT SEE HIGH LEVELS OF ENCAMPMENTS**

Bus stops are traditionally built to be a temporary respite for people waiting to use public transit, providing shade and seating until their bus arrives. At some locations, bus stops are instead used to create makeshift shelters where individuals occupy the entire transit stop, rendering it unusable for individuals attempting to use public transit. To discourage this inappropriate use of bus stops, Phoenix should renovate bus stops frequently used for encampments to discourage encampments at these locations. This can include arranging the shade structures to promote temporary use, arranging seating in a way that discourages inappropriate use, and other changes to ensure that bus stops are used for their intended purpose.

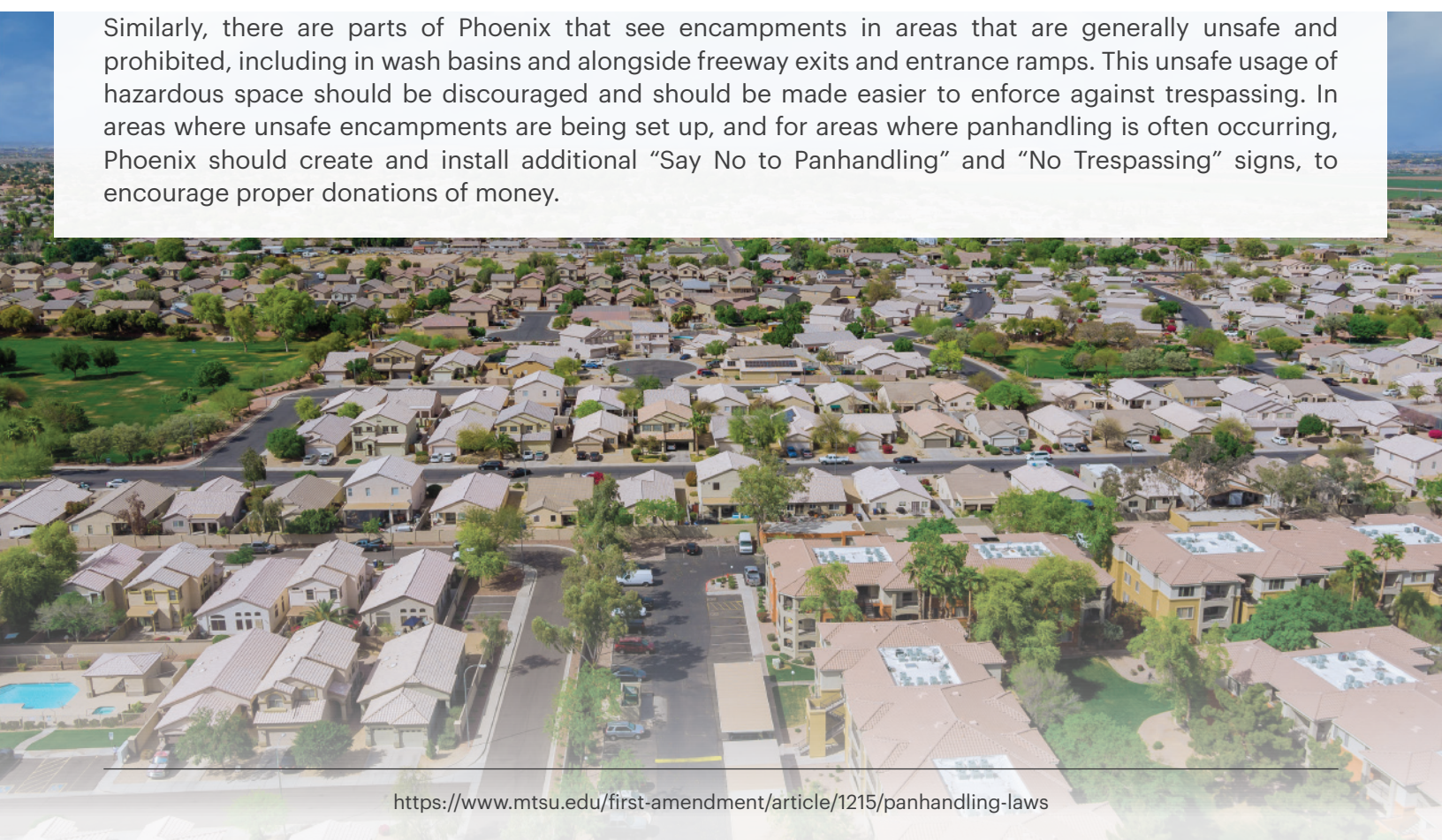
## ✓ **MAKE THE PRIVATE PROPERTY CLEANUP PILOT PROGRAM A PERMANENT PROGRAM FOR PHOENIX RESIDENTS**

A by-product of homelessness is increased trash, waste, and debris on private properties near areas experiencing high rates of homelessness. In response to this, the Neighborhood Services Department has been piloting a private property cleanup program, which is intended to help individual private property owners utilize existing City of Phoenix resources and contracts to assist in the cleanup of waste and debris. This pilot includes providing roll-off dumpster assistance, right-of-way cleanup, and enhanced biohazard cleaning for human waste. The early stages of this program have seen positive feedback and would have a beneficial impact on other city hotspots. Phoenix should expand the pilot program into a permanent program to help alleviate the burden property owners face when cleaning up private property.

## ✓ **INSTALL “SAY NO TO PANHANDLING” & “NO TRESPASSING” SIGNS IN HOTSPOT LOCATIONS**

Panhandling, the act of asking for money in a public setting, is often seen on roadways and near freeways. Panhandling can be a dangerous activity for the panhandler, given the proximity to the roadway, and is often more detrimental in the long term. The U.S. Supreme Court established that panhandling is a constitutional right under the First Amendment, and as such it cannot be abolished. It can, however, be discouraged in favor of other charitable donations. Already installed near certain roadways in Phoenix, “Say No to Panhandling” signs encourage drivers and pedestrians to donate to organizations providing resources and services that aid homeless individuals, instead of giving directly to panhandlers. This has a more profound impact on addressing the homeless crisis than giving directly to panhandlers and can go further in supporting the services designed to lift individuals out of homelessness.

Similarly, there are parts of Phoenix that see encampments in areas that are generally unsafe and prohibited, including in wash basins and alongside freeway exits and entrance ramps. This unsafe usage of hazardous space should be discouraged and should be made easier to enforce against trespassing. In areas where unsafe encampments are being set up, and for areas where panhandling is often occurring, Phoenix should create and install additional “Say No to Panhandling” and “No Trespassing” signs, to encourage proper donations of money.



<https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1215/panhandling-laws>



# MENTAL HEALTH

Mental Health is a key component that needs to be addressed when looking at the homelessness crisis in Phoenix. Those with poor mental health are more likely to be affected by the variables that contribute to homelessness, including poverty and personal vulnerability. Certain mental health disorders may make it harder for individuals to maintain steady employment, reducing their income. Individuals may also have a harder time maintaining their support networks becoming estranged from those close to them, resulting in a lack of support systems in times of need. A person's capacity for resiliency and resourcefulness can also be hampered by mental illness, which will similarly obscure reasoning and impair judgment. These are just some of the many

factors that can make those who have mental illnesses more susceptible to homelessness.

Poor mental health, in turn, is exacerbated by homelessness. The strain of living on the streets can amplify mental illnesses and stimulate anxiety and panic, depressive symptoms, insomnia, and drug abuse. Those who have mental illnesses and are homeless have the same requirements as those without mental illnesses, including access to safe shelter, education, access to transportation, and effective medical care. To effectively care for people who are homeless, it is crucial to address mental health and the challenges it can create for individuals trying to exit homelessness.

## ✓ **EXPAND THE BEHAVIORAL ENGAGEMENT TEAMS PILOT PROGRAM CITYWIDE**

Those who have mental illnesses and are homeless may be wary of accepting services, whether it be a lack of understanding of what those services entail, or a reduced ability to properly employ reasoning and judgment. This necessitates the use of trained Behavioral Engagement Teams (BET), made up of people who have training and experience in communicating with those suffering from untreated mental illness. These teams can more effectively explain and transmit key information and address the concerns these individuals have with accepting services. While it may take more than one interaction with these professionals, having people who adequately address the needs and hesitations of those experiencing mental illness is a crucial step in getting individuals to eventually accept services.

Currently a pilot program being tested in select hot spots in Phoenix, the BET teams have had great success in getting those suffering from mental illnesses to accept and enter services. To better engage with the homeless population suffering from untreated mental illness, Phoenix must make this pilot a permanent program and expand it to cover all areas of Phoenix.

## ✓ **ADVOCATE FOR THE STATE TO PROVIDE MORE STATE BEDS FOR MENTALLY ILL PATIENTS AT THE STATE HOSPITAL OR OTHER LOCATIONS**

Some individuals experiencing mental illness need intensive care, including long-term inpatient services. The most serious cases may need 24/7 care and assistance and require intensive supportive services. These services require adequate bed space and staffing and are needed to help those with severe mental illness develop an effective treatment plan to stabilize their mental state to the highest degree possible. The State of Arizona funds and operates a state-run mental hospital that provides treatment and care to the most severely mentally ill patients. The City of Phoenix needs to advocate for the State to

provide more bed space and funding to offer shelter and treatment for individuals with these severe mental illnesses. Further, Phoenix needs to advocate that the state explore offering additional beds and services at other locations, to increase the available services and bed space for the severely mentally ill throughout the region. Phoenix should also advocate that the State quickly implement recommendations made by the Joint Legislative Psychiatric Hospital Review Council to promote patient safety and improve service delivery.

## ✓ **PARTNER WITH HOSPITALS TO HAVE SERVICE NAVIGATORS FOR HOMELESS PATIENTS TO HAVE AN EXIT PLAN AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THEIR MEDICAL CARE**

Being homeless may expose an individual to many hazards, exacerbate pre-existing conditions, and compound minor health issues, snowballing into more serious physical and mental illnesses that require professional care. Often when a homeless individual needs medical services, a hospital emergency room is one of the only places to which they can turn. Once they receive the treatment for whatever brought them to the hospital, homeless individuals are often discharged with no additional resources back into the environment that contributed to their health problems. To address this, Phoenix should partner with hospitals to connect those who are experiencing homelessness to primary care and services. Embedding a health and service navigator in emergency departments throughout Phoenix can help connect homeless patients with effective services to address their health needs and housing status.

This is a plan already in place at some hospitals in Maricopa County. Some non-profits, such as Circle the City, have health navigators in some hospital emergency rooms, and they help coordinate care plans for homeless individuals upon their discharge from the hospital. Expanding these services to additional hospitals across the City may reduce the number of homeless individuals who exit hospitals without any firm plans following care. The end goal is to ensure that a homeless individual does not walk out of the hospital without a care plan or at least be connected to available resources they can access.

## ✓ **EXPLORE HAVING TRAINED PROFESSIONALS WHO CAN BE ON POLICE CALLS TO HELP COMMUNICATE WITH THE INDIVIDUAL AND GIVE THEIR PROFESSIONAL OPINION ON NEEDED NEXT STEPS**

More and more, the public calls on our police department when a situation with community members suffering with mental health are becoming dangerous. Often, police officers do not have the necessary training to be the most effective in these situations. Providing trained mental health professionals on these calls would provide much needed expertise. Additionally, a trained professional may be more effective in communicating to a judge or other professionals why certain services or plans are recommended in a case involving a person with mental health illness. This may include court-ordered psychiatric care and other mental health services to stabilize the individual. The City of Phoenix needs to explore having trained individuals who can join police calls to properly provide mental health care to those in a mental health crisis.

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<https://www.azleg.gov/videooplayer/?clientID=6361162879&eventID=2023011000>  
<https://www.circlethecity.org/hospitals/>

## ✔ **DEVELOP VIGOROUS AND TARGETED RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES TO FULLY STAFF THE COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND EXPLORE EXPANDING THE PROGRAM TO ADDITIONAL FIRE STATIONS ACROSS THE CITY OF PHOENIX**

Expanded by the Phoenix City Council in 2021, the Community Assistance Program (CAP) was transformed from a volunteer-based program into a permanently funded program with paid staff. CAP is a team of professionally trained individuals who provide 24-hour on-scene services for crisis intervention and victim assistance services to individuals in need. CAP units are currently housed in select fire stations in Phoenix, working in partnership with social service agencies and the Phoenix Fire and Phoenix Police Departments. This program aims to provide appropriate crisis response to individuals in need of assistance, connecting them to the services and resources they need. Working on a wide range of calls, CAP works to respond quickly and efficiently to those in need, including those in mental health-induced crises.

Currently, CAP is understaffed from targeted levels and needs to increase staffing to fully service more areas of the City. Phoenix needs to develop a vigorous, comprehensive strategy to quickly recruit, train, and staff CAP. This should include creative and unique promotions at schools and conferences, and public information campaigns. Phoenix should also explore partnerships with schools and training facilities to help staff the program. As staffing levels increase, Phoenix should then look at expanding the CAP program to additional fire stations throughout the City of Phoenix, to efficiently serve a greater number of Phoenix residents.



## ✓ **ADVOCATE OUR FEDERAL LAWMAKERS FOR CHANGES IN MEDICAID LAW TO ALLOW FUNDING TO BE USED FOR MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES THAT CONTAIN MORE THAN 16 BEDS.**

Under Section 1905(a)(b) of the Social Security Act, states are prohibited from using Medicaid financing for use in Institutions for Mental Diseases (IMD). IMDs are institutions defined in the law as “hospital, nursing facility, or other institution of more than 16 beds, that is primarily engaged in providing diagnosis, treatment, or care of persons with mental diseases, including medical attention, nursing care and related services.” With limited exceptions, any residential facility that has more than 16 beds and is primarily providing mental health and substance use disorder treatment is not eligible to receive reimbursements through Medicaid.

The aim is to work with our federal partners to modify federal Medicaid law to permit Medicaid payments for mental health treatment that is provided at IMDs. For many individuals suffering from moderate to severe mental illness, inpatient mental and psychiatric care is an important, and often necessary, part of an individual’s treatment and care plan. While many organizations and groups have been lobbying the federal government for years, the City of Phoenix needs to take a more visible and dynamic approach to this issue. Phoenix should not only partner with local and national organizations already advocating for these changes but should also engage in direct dialogue with our federal representatives to explain why this change in federal law is necessary in addressing the mental health needs of our homeless community.



<https://www.phoenix.gov/fire/community-assistance-program>  
[https://www.ssa.gov/OP\\_Home/ssact/title19/1905.html](https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/ssact/title19/1905.html)



## HOUSING & SHELTER

Finding housing or rental space is something that nearly every person will have to go through or has gone through already. It can be a difficult process to find a place that is within budget or to find a house that is within a person's price range. With a rise in rental and home prices over the last few years, these difficulties have gotten significantly worse. For households that were already operating on slim budgets, this rise in costs put additional strain on their financial health. When it comes to homelessness, one of the biggest reasons why people end up on the streets is due to an inability to afford the housing options currently available to the person. Lack of housing is a critical component of the homeless crisis and one that

needs to be addressed as cities continue to tackle homelessness.

Many homeless individuals have no choice but to remain on the streets as there are frequently not enough shelter beds available to take in every homeless individual. There is a great need for both shelters and diversity in housing options, with those options being at both attainable and affordable price points. Phoenix needs to move forward and help assist those facing housing instability find housing, help assist and prevent people from becoming evicted, and increase the amount of affordable housing, shelter space, and vouchers for those who are homeless or facing homelessness.



## EVICTION PREVENTION

### ✓ **ESTABLISH A LEGAL CLINIC IN PARTNERSHIP WITH A NON-PROFIT OR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION**

Going through eviction proceedings can be a difficult and stressful time for many households, and with that comes a great deal of uncertainty. Evictions may also create barriers down the road when households are regaining financial stability, as evictions show up on an individual's record for up to seven years after one takes place. The eviction can be disputed during proceedings, or a tenant can attempt to have the eviction removed from their credit report or tenant screening records, but many tenants are unaware of what is available during these times. Phoenix should partner with a non-profit or educational institution to establish a free legal clinic for Phoenix residents, where the provider that is partnered with Phoenix can provide legal consultations, inform households of their options and rights, and connect households with available resources to assist them during this tumultuous period.

### ✓ **EDUCATE TENANTS ON THEIR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE LANDLORD TENANT ACT THROUGH CLASSES AND HANDOUTS**

The Arizona Residential Landlord and Tenant Act details the rights and obligations of both the landlord and the tenant in a rental agreement. It is meant to ensure that quality rental housing remains available to all Arizonans, and to establish what is and is not granted as rights to both parties. Under this act, tenants are given many rights they often are unaware of, including protections against retaliation and suitable living conditions. Phoenix should do its part to make tenants aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Landlord Tenant Act, through both in-person classes and with informational handouts.

[https://housing.az.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/Landlord\\_Tenant\\_Act\\_May-2023\\_1.pdf](https://housing.az.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/Landlord_Tenant_Act_May-2023_1.pdf)

## ✓ **EXPAND THE NUMBER OF LANDLORD FAIRS AND INCREASE OUTREACH TO LANDLORDS ACROSS THE CITY OF PHOENIX**

Landlord fairs are information sessions hosted by the Phoenix Department of Housing to promote voucher programs in Phoenix, explain the benefits to landlords who accept vouchers, as well as educate landlords on what these programs mean for themselves and their properties. These fairs have seen an increase in the number of landlords who accept voucher holders, have increased the awareness of the program, and cleared up misconceptions about accepting tenants who utilize vouchers as a form of payment. These are currently held biannually, hosted in a singular location in midtown Phoenix. To increase the number of landlords who are aware of and willing to accept voucher holders, Phoenix needs to increase the number of landlord fairs, expand outreach to more landlords in Phoenix, and host these fairs in multiple locations across the city.

## ✓ **MAKE THE LANDLORD INCENTIVE PAYMENT PROGRAM PERMANENT VIA FEDERAL OR GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

One program that resulted in an increased number of landlords accepting voucher holders as tenants is the Landlord Incentive Program. Through this program, when a landlord signs on a tenant who is using vouchers as a form of payment, the landlord receives a cash signing bonus per voucher holder they lease to. This program has been funded through one-time federal funds, and once funds are expended there is no current plan to replenish the fund. Phoenix should make the Landlord Incentive Payment program permanent and engage in dialogue with our federal partners utilizing federal funds or grant opportunities to maintain the program.



## **SHELTER/EMERGENCY SHELTER**

## ✓ **DEDICATE A SET AMOUNT OF BED SPACE TO BE RESERVED FOR CITY STAFF TO OFFER NIGHTLY WHEN ENGAGING WITH HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS**

When city staff engage with homeless individuals, it can be difficult to get people into services without corresponding housing. Whether it be Phoenix police officers or navigators with Phoenix CARES, Phoenix should have the ability to offer bed space to the most vulnerable as they are engaged. Like the City of Mesa's "Off the Streets" program, Phoenix should lease or purchase a vacant hotel or residential building with dedicated beds available to be offered to homeless individuals being engaged by city staff. This would be a short-term solution to move these individuals into more traditional emergency shelter space as it becomes available or other housing options. Onsite services would offer assistance with gaining housing or shelter space and provide security, and as soon as an individual is placed, the bed space would become available again for another individual. This would be dedicated solely for referral by first responders or non-profit partners and would be a closed campus model with no drop-in or walk-up services.

<https://www.phoenix.gov/newsroom/housing/1473>

<https://www.mesaaz.gov/residents/community-development/addressing-homelessness/off-the-streets>



## ✓ **DEVELOP PLANS TO GUARANTEE DIVERSITY IN SHELTER OFFERINGS TO COVER FAMILIES, YOUTH, PEOPLE WITH PETS, AND ADDITIONAL SUB-DEMOGRAPHICS**

There are many reasons why homeless individuals might be hesitant to enter a traditional shelter space when offered a bed. Some individuals have family and loved ones who are also homeless that they do not want to be separated from. Others may have pets or animals that they are hesitant to leave behind. Other groups, such as youth or the elderly, are unable to be in traditional shelter spaces due to shelter requirements or a lack of needed services for these groups at these locations. There are many other types of reasons that an individual may be hesitant or unable to enter a shelter space. Phoenix should create plans to ensure there is enough shelter space for special populations that are otherwise unable to enter “typical” shelter space.

## ✓ **EXPLORE CREATING A PET HOTEL IN PARTNERSHIP WITH A LOCAL ORGANIZATION TO TEMPORARILY HOUSE ANIMALS UNTIL THEIR OWNER CAN FIND PET-FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATIONS**

One of the reasons a homeless individual may turn down the offer of bed space is due to their pet or animal. When living in a transitional lifestyle, a pet can often be an individual’s primary form of a support network, and many consider their pets a part of their family. When faced with entering bed space where they cannot bring their pet, they will decline the space to avoid the separation. Many homeless pet owners just want to ensure their pet is safe and they can have a guarantee that their pet will be cared for and reunited with them if they must part for a temporary period. To help assist pet owners with care for their pets while they find pet-friendly accommodations, Phoenix should explore a partnership with a non-profit or organization that deals with pet care to create a pet hotel, which would temporarily house and care for homeless individuals’ pets until they can be reunited.

## ✓ **DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS BOTH REGIONALLY AND WITH INDIVIDUAL MUNICIPALITIES TO EASE THE BURDEN OF TAKING ON A LARGER SHARE OF THE HOMELESS CRISIS COMPARED TO PHOENIX’S POPULATION SIZE**

As the homeless crisis has continued to grow in Maricopa County over the last 6 years, Phoenix has continuously shouldered a larger share of the homeless population when compared to Phoenix’s population size. While Phoenix has roughly 37% of the region’s population, over 71% of the homeless population resides within the city. There are a variety of factors that can be attributed to this, including the concentration of resources such as the Human Services Campus in Phoenix, or the larger investments in homeless services when compared to other municipalities. Regardless, this increased share of the crisis places burdens and strains on existing resources, necessitating additional investments to handle this increase. To ensure Phoenix can continue to effectively address the needs of this crisis, the city should enter regional and individual agreements with municipalities, to either take on some of the resources and

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<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-counties-total.html>  
<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-total-cities-and-towns.html>  
<https://azmag.gov/Programs/Homelessness/Data/Point-In-Time-Homelessness-Count>

services being provided by Phoenix or to assist in the funding and implementation of these services that Phoenix is implementing. Homelessness is a regional issue, and Phoenix has members of the homeless community from all municipalities across the area. Forming these partnerships may improve service delivery and help alleviate some of the strain placed on city systems.

## ✓ **CONSTRUCT TINY HOME VILLAGES ON AVAILABLE STATE LAND**

Tiny Home Villages are clusters of tiny homes, small micro-structures that are typically 70-250 sq. ft. in size. These structures are almost always enclosed, with space for storage, bedding, electric connection, AC climate control, and provide separate sanitation and bathroom facilities. These structures can house 1 – 4 people and can be built in clusters, meaning that a village can contain anywhere from 10 – 150 structures, dependent on available space. These are relatively cheap to build when compared to traditional brick-and-mortar shelter buildings and can be constructed quickly due to their size and easily replicable design. Due to the size of the homeless population in Phoenix and the requirement to clear out “The Zone” encampment downtown, Phoenix needs to engage the State to provide nearby state-owned land to construct Tiny Home Villages to house portions of the homeless community safely.



## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

## ✓ **ENGAGE THE STATE TO INCREASE ITS CONTRIBUTION TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND SHELTER SPACE AND EXPLORE USING \$1-LAND LEASES FOR SHELTERS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON STATE LAND**

The State of Arizona has an abundance of land in and near Phoenix that presents prime opportunities for use. The State has the potential to utilize this land to develop affordable housing and additional shelter space. Due to laws regarding gifts and handouts, the State cannot just give these properties to developers as this would be “gifting” land. Instead, the City of Phoenix should work with the State to explore the feasibility of providing \$1-land leases to develop affordable housing and shelter space. \$1-land leases are a practice already in use, as the state will give long-term leases to schools for the total cumulative cost of \$1. This is done to provide land for a specific purpose without “gifting” the land to a non-State entity.

## ✓ **ADVOCATE FOR A FAIR INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF VOUCHERS GIVEN TO THE CITY OF PHOENIX BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

Housing Choice Vouchers, provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), are the federal government's way of assisting low-income households with attaining and affording rental housing by covering a portion of rental expenses. The number of vouchers dispensed to a city is determined by HUD based on multiple factors. Despite being the fifth largest city in the country, Phoenix is receiving significantly fewer vouchers than cities of similar size. For example, Phoenix has a population slightly larger than Philadelphia, yet Phoenix receives over 12,000 fewer vouchers than Philadelphia. In fact, of the top

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<https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/23727144/phx-homeless-lawsuit-3-27-ruling.pdf>

10 most populous cities in the United States, Phoenix has the lowest number of vouchers allocated to its housing authority. Phoenix must advocate for HUD and our federal legislators to reexamine the formula used to determine the number of vouchers dispensed and increase the number of vouchers allocated to Phoenix residents.

## ✔ **ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT TO STREAMLINE THE HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER APPLICATION AND ATTAINMENT PROCESS**

As with many needs that involve applications and bureaucracy, it can be a long and arduous process to apply and wait for a voucher from HUD – with some reporting that it can take months for an application to be processed and years for them to obtain a voucher. While part of the problem lies in the limited availability of vouchers when compared to the need present in Phoenix, there are additional headaches that can be eased to make the process of applying for and obtaining a voucher easier. Phoenix should engage in discussion with HUD to develop ways in which the application process can be streamlined and move more rapidly to give applicants quicker answers as they attempt to find stable and affordable housing. Providing prompt and efficient delivery of responses can help keep applicants informed of what options are potentially available to them still.

## ✔ **WORK WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT TO EXPAND PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY, TIMELINES, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOUCHER HOLDERS**

Many individuals who are struggling to afford housing may make too much to qualify for a voucher or may not have one or two specific qualifications but could still benefit from the use of a voucher to assist in rental costs. Even if someone can obtain a voucher, they typically only have 3-6 months to find a place that accepts them, before they expire and are given to someone else. Many voucher holders have difficulty finding places that accept vouchers, especially since the voucher amount may not be updated as frequently as rents are rising. To combat these issues, Phoenix should begin working with HUD to explore program eligibility requirements to make more individuals eligible for vouchers, explore extending the timeline someone may use a voucher, and look into ways to more frequently adjust the voucher amount to keep up with rising rental prices.

## ✔ **STUDY WAYS TO STREAMLINE THE ZONING & PERMITTING FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING & SHELTERS AND EXPLORE REDUCING OR WAIVING ASSOCIATED FEES FOR SUCH PROJECTS**

When discussing the need for affordable housing and shelter space, there is always a consensus that it cannot be built fast enough. One of the ways that construction and development projects can get slowed down is through the zoning and permitting process, which can also add increased costs to such projects. There is a dire need for more affordable housing and shelter space, to assist low-income residents and homeless individuals. To allow for more rapid construction, Phoenix should study ways the zoning and permitting process can be sped up for projects that construct affordable housing or shelter space. Further, Phoenix should explore reducing or waiving fees associated with zoning and permitting as it pertains to affordable housing and shelter space.

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[https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/dashboard](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/dashboard)

## ✓ **AMEND THE PHOENIX CITY CODE TO ALLOW FOR ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS TO BE CONSTRUCTED**

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU), also referred to as a casita, is a small secondary housing unit adjacent to a single-family home on a residential lot. These are either detached or attached constructions that allow for the housing of usually 1-2 people. These are like mother-in-law suites in that they allow someone to live on the same property and maintain separate living space from the main household. These are excellent cost-effective ways to safely house family members, friends, or those needing additional housing. By amending City Code, Phoenix can provide an additional pathway to create additional housing and rental units within the city.

## ✓ **DEVELOP REGIONAL PERMITTING STANDARDS SO THAT DEVELOPERS CAN MORE EFFICIENTLY AND QUICKLY CONSTRUCT AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS**

When developers look at what to build and where in the Phoenix metro to build it, one thing they may look at is what the permitting and zoning process is like for each city before deciding where to build. For developers who are already familiar with one municipality's process, it can seem like an arduous task to go through the same process in another city – especially if you are building the same type of housing on a lot with equivalent zoning. To make it easier for developers to increase the city's housing stock, Phoenix should engage regional partners to develop permitting standards to make the construction of affordable housing an easier process. This can enable the City of Phoenix to see that a developer went through a similar permitting process within a partner municipality on a lot with equivalent zoning, and not force the developer to go through the same time-intensive process for an identical project.





# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Employment stability and homelessness are interconnected, directly impacting one another. Having a consistent source of income is a crucial way to ensure that homeless individuals can exit homelessness. When a person experiences instability in their employment, they are more likely to be at risk of being homeless due to financial difficulties and stress. Most homeless individuals will report a desire and willingness to work but also report barriers and difficulties in entering the workforce. Employment and increased financial stability are key components to lifting people out of homelessness.

Workforce development is a broad topic that covers a variety of areas, including job training, employment opportunities, and advancements in education. Bridging the gap between services for homelessness and workforce service systems is a necessary component in tackling the homeless crisis. Phoenix can develop a strong pathway to stable housing and employment by providing job training and educational advancement opportunities in a unified approach. This dual approach can help homeless individuals begin the transition to stability and self-sufficiency, creating a stronger and more financially healthy workforce.

## ✔ **DEVELOP COMMUNITY COLLEGE CLASSES TO TEACH LIFE AND JOB SKILLS TO HOMELESS AND FORMERLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS**

When a person has been homeless for an extended period, it can be difficult to readjust their lifestyle from what they are normally used to. Learning how to manage multiple bills, get through a job interview, regularly buy groceries and supplies, and other life skills can be challenging. While these tasks are second nature to most people, it is often something that must be learned or relearned after years of being wired to approach life from a different place. To help ease the difficulty of transitioning from one way of life to another, the City of Phoenix should partner with local community colleges to develop regular classes that provide life and job skill training to individuals who are attempting to exit or are exiting homelessness. These classes may help alleviate some of the stress and unknowns of transitioning out of homelessness and provide everyday skills people can use in individuals' private and work life.

## ✔ **EXPLORE AN EXPANSION OF THE PHOENIX PROMISE PROGRAM SO THAT MORE APPLICANTS CAN BE ACCEPTED AND ALLOW APPLICANTS TO ATTEND TRADE SCHOOLS**

The Phoenix Promise Program is a \$5-million scholarship program through the City of Phoenix, which provides funding support for eligible Phoenix students pursuing two- and four-year degrees at Maricopa Community College. While the program has previously used American Rescue Plan Act funding, Phoenix should explore making the program funded permanently and expanding the program to include more Phoenix residents; currently, the program can support around 400 residents in any given year. Phoenix should also research the ability to allow applicants to attend trade and vocational schools, as these schools often help people get into a trade or technical job in critically important fields of work. Further, Phoenix should work to help homeless individuals become aware of this program, to provide additional educational pathways for people who are homeless.

<https://www.phoenix.gov/newsroom/ced/2522>

## ✓ **PARTNER WITH LOCAL UNIONS TO DEVELOP TRADE TRAINING COURSES OR SCHOOLS THAT CAN BE OFFERED TO HOMELESS RESIDENTS**

Many unions in the Phoenix region have or assist individuals in attending trade training courses or schools, which leads to attaining necessary certification in many industries. These pieces of training are critically important for anyone who is looking to enter a trade. By partnering with local unions, Phoenix can help bring homeless individuals who need job training and education to these current courses or look to develop new training courses so that homeless individuals can gain the necessary knowledge to get and retain jobs in trade career tracts. This can further homeless individuals' ability to exit homelessness by providing exposure and access to other individuals in related fields, helping to build a network and connections in their professional and private lives.

## ✓ **EXPAND THE COLLEGE DEPOT PROGRAM TO MULTIPLE LOCATIONS ACROSS PHOENIX**

College Depot is a free, full-service college access center that is currently located at the Burton Barr Central Library near Downtown Phoenix. This program has a team of advisors that assist with college planning and all action steps needed to earn a high school diploma, GED, apprenticeship, or college degree. This is done through online appointments, in-person appointments, and workshops that cover financial aid, scholarships, admissions, and more necessary topics that pertain to getting into educational institutions. Phoenix should expand the physical locations of the College Depot and make the service available in person at multiple libraries across the City on a rotating or permanent basis, to bring these important services closer to residents who may not be able to travel Downtown. Phoenix should also explore having targeted workshops and seminars at various locations across the City, to promote the program to residents who could benefit from this program, such as homeless residents or working adults who are obtaining GEDs at a later stage in life. Increasing the promotion of College Depot, and expanding physical access to the resources it contains, can open up new pathways for individuals struggling with career and educational advancement.

## ✓ **PARTNER WITH GOODWILL AND THE EXCEL CENTER TO PROVIDE SCHOOLS WITHIN PHOENIX FOR ADULTS TO EARN THEIR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS**

It is estimated that there are over 720,000 working-age adults in the state of Arizona who do not have a high school diploma. Not having a diploma can result in lower earnings, fewer employment opportunities, a higher reliance on public assistance, and an overall decrease in quality of life. Providing an opportunity for adults to earn a high school diploma can increase income and job opportunities for those seeking to advance their financial standing, which is especially important for those exiting homelessness. Goodwill has established The Excel Center (TEC), a tuition-free public charter high school that provides the opportunity for adults to earn a high school diploma, as well as certifications and college credits. In the interest of removing barriers to attaining an education, TEC also offers free childcare during classes, transportation assistance, coaching, and additional services that help alleviate some of the roadblocks to getting an education. TEC has had locations in multiple states and recently opened its first Arizona-based school in 2022. By partnering with TEC to bring schools within Phoenix, the City can help those who are attempting to gain greater stability in employment and housing by furthering their education and credentials.

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<https://www.phoenixpubliclibrary.org/collegedepot>

## ✔ **ADVERTISE AND PROMOTE JOB OPENINGS WITHIN THE CITY OF PHOENIX TO POTENTIAL, QUALIFIED CANDIDATES WHO MAY BE HOMELESS AND LOOKING FOR EMPLOYMENT**

The City of Phoenix has numerous vacancies across city departments, and many of those listings struggle to attract candidates. These job openings cover both part-time and full-time positions and are over a wide variety of career types. Phoenix should market, advertise, and promote applicable job listings to homeless individuals seeking employment opportunities, and do outreach and job centers targeted to service the homeless community. This could include information sessions at shelters and job centers, advertising at centers providing services to the homeless community, or partnering with local non-profits to disseminate employment listings to the community. All candidates would still be screened and need the basic qualifications for the role, but this would increase the number of applicants for these postings, while also providing additional employment opportunities to the homeless community.

## ✔ **ENGAGE IN DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO OFFER FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR THOSE EXITING HOMELESSNESS WHO ARE LOOKING TO FURTHER THEIR EDUCATION**

One of the more significant barriers that people experiencing homelessness face is the cost of educational advancement. Many fields of work require or heavily prefer some form of higher education to advance upward, limiting the number of opportunities for those without such degrees. Phoenix should directly engage our educational providers in the Greater Phoenix region to offer financial assistance and scholarship opportunities directly to those who are exiting homelessness or recently have left homelessness. By easing the path to educational advancement, homeless individuals can have additional pathways to increase their income, attain additional employment opportunities, and remain out of homelessness.



<https://excelcenteraz.org/>

## CONCLUSION

Homelessness is a complex issue that has been difficult to effectively address. For years there have been programs and solutions proposed that aimed to solve homelessness through laws, programs, and initiatives. These proposals have all failed to make a dent in the ever-growing homeless crisis for a multitude of reasons. Whether it be that past solutions took a one-size-fits-all approach, or lacked adequate support and funding, the rate at which homelessness has grown in the Phoenix metro area has only continued to increase. This can make it seem as though it is an impossible issue to tackle, and that homelessness will never be solvable. While homelessness will never be completely eradicated it can be reduced, and it is hard but not impossible to address.

Homelessness is usually the result of many factors coming together, which can include but is not limited to housing instability, a loss of income, untreated mental illness, addiction, lack of a support system, and hard-to-access resources. Addressing each of the many factors that feed into homelessness requires comprehensive strategies that require multiple stakeholders to come together, including community groups, government agencies, and non-profits. Bringing people to the table can be challenging, but it can be done with intentional and thought-out action by the City of Phoenix. Sometimes it may require a solution be created from scratch, but often there are various examples of other organizations that have found one or two programs that make an impact. Phoenix does not need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to solutions; it just needs to see what other communities have done and adopt those best practices that work in Phoenix.

By partnering with organizations that have a history of impact in the areas that contribute to homelessness, Phoenix can support the experts in these areas in the impactful work they currently do, instead of trying to do it all solo. As has been done in the past, when cities try and fix the issue by themselves by only focusing on the immediate visible needs, it has almost always failed to make significant progress because they've failed to look at the larger, regional picture. By working with neighboring cities, other levels of government, and other organizations that have a history of working in homelessness, there can be a concerted effort to properly address the needs of the homeless community and break down the barriers that prevent people from exiting homelessness.

Whether Phoenix uses new out-of-the-box solutions or tried-and-true methods from other communities, there will always be work that needs to be done to get people off the streets. Additional plans for how to help lift people out of homelessness and prevent people from becoming homeless will need to be developed and implemented as time goes on. For now, the solutions proposed in this plan seek to be a launching pad for a cohesive and vigorous effort to make a meaningful impact on homelessness. With thoughtful and intentional leadership, Phoenix can begin to see an impact in the work being done to put an end to this growing crisis.