

# ATX | HELPS

The business community, leading a coalition of concerned citizens, is stepping up to do its part to help those in need. Driven by the Austin Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Austin Alliance—as well as a number of other businesses, nonprofit entities, faith-based organizations, and individuals—ATX Helps launched on Nov. 7, 2019, to bring a first-step navigation center to Austin.

## Goal

Our goal is to raise \$14 million for construction and operation of at least one Sprung shelter that will provide immediate housing and other necessities for Austinites experiencing homelessness.

## Top Priorities

- Creation of a 300-bed temporary emergency shelter/housing navigation center
- Creation of a warehouse for storage of personal belongings
- Increased street outreach to reunite people experiencing homelessness with family and/or connect them with services and shelter



## Background

Austin business and community leaders went as a delegation to San Diego, where in January 2017, more than 5,600 people were living on the street in homemade tents and encampments. Private-sector leaders raised the funds to construct what is now a four-shelter effort. The instances of sitting/standing/lying in the public right of way have dropped dramatically. The shelters, called Sprung shelters, have been so successful in San Diego over the past two years that numerous other cities are moving quickly to adopt this model.

Donations can be made online at  
**atxhelps.org**

Please call or email Mike Rollins for information on how to make a substantial donation. **mrollins@austinchamber.com | 512.322.5615**

Donations may be tax-deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law. Please check with your personal tax adviser regarding the deduction of your contribution.

## Emergency Shelter

One of this organization's top priorities is to stand up at least one temporary Sprung shelter. Sprung shelters will fulfill a critical need of immediate temporary/emergency shelter for those currently living on the street with nowhere else to go. Once funding goals have been met, structures can be fully operational in three months or less.

- These fully heated and air-conditioned structures typically hold about 150 bunk beds and can comfortably sleep 300 people; the structures will have safe and clean dining and sanitation services, including showers, bathrooms, and laundry facilities.
- Plans include providing large, lockable bins for each person housed.
- People will have access to comprehensive wrap-around services, including social services and support for mental health and drug/alcohol issues.
- People may enter with their pets, partners, and belongings, and will not be turned away unless they are deemed a danger to themselves or others.

## Sprung Structure

Sprung structures are tension-fabric (vinyl membrane), aluminum-frame structures that many cities such as San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Toronto, and Minneapolis have recently begun using for emergency shelter/housing navigation. Sprung structures are ideal for this purpose because they are

- Temporary but can remain in place for 20 or more years if desired
- Building-code compliant and efficient in terms of heating/cooling
- Provide a large, open, and flexible footprint that is ideal to serve and monitor large numbers of people indoors
- Can be ordered in virtually any length/width dimension to suit the need and/or site
- Can be erected in a matter of weeks and are less expensive than constructing a building or purchasing and remodeling an existing building

All that is needed to stand up the structure is a relatively flat, open plot, such as a parking lot, street, or customized concrete pad. The capital costs to stand-up a 300-bed structure total about \$2 million. Annual operating costs for a 300 bed facility are estimated to be \$5-6 million.

## Low-Barrier Access

ATX Helps will provide low-barrier access to safe shelter, basic needs and housing navigation services.

The objective is to reduce as many barriers as possible to encourage entry. Clients will not be required to engage in services, but a broad array of critically important basic needs and housing navigation services will be provided on-site, including emergency shelter, housing navigation, food service, restrooms, showers, case management, pet care, storage for belongings, and more.

## Operations and Coordination with Homeless Service System

ATX Helps is coordinating with Austin/Travis County Integral Care and other local social service provider agencies for the management of all on-site operations, provision of services and connection to housing and housing resources. Providers will be required to use the shared Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to enter and track all client information.