

A photograph of a homeless encampment. Several tents are pitched on a grassy area next to a road with a metal guardrail. In the background, there is a large, multi-story building and bare trees, suggesting a cold or transitional season. The scene is overlaid with a large orange semi-transparent rectangle containing text.

HOPE ATLANTA

# FIELD REPORT

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JULY 2023

An Inside Look at the State of  
Homelessness in Our Communities



Dear Friend,

Thank you for your interest in homelessness in our Atlanta community. I was deeply encouraged by the positive response to our inaugural field report, released in March 2023. I believe this enthusiasm signals a growing awareness and concern toward our neighbors facing homelessness and their challenges.

At HOPE Atlanta, we provide individualized support and services to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness to help them obtain housing, overcome their unique obstacles, and achieve self-sufficiency. **But we aren't working alone. Combatting homelessness is a collaborative effort involving many partner organizations, government entities, and, most importantly, the community.**

There's every reason to believe our combined efforts are working. During the pandemic, organizations rallied to safeguard the unsheltered, resulting in a 38% reduction in homelessness between 2020 and 2022. "LIFT 2.0," the next phase of that initiative, has seen more than 257 neighbors permanently housed with a goal to help 1,500 households transition from homelessness.

But there is still much to be done as we work to house and protect our neighbors amid ongoing crises – particularly the dire lack of affordable housing. Please consider following us on our digital channels for more updates, stories of HOPE, and ways to make a difference.

Thank you for your compassion and support.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julio Carrillo".

Julio Carrillo, CEO

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## LIFT 2.0

# A COLLABORATIVE RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS IN ATLANTA

### THE INITIATIVE AIMS TO HOUSE 1,500 UNSHELTERED AND CHRONICALLY HOMELESS

Homeless encampments are a harsh reminder of the scourge of homelessness and inequality in our communities and can even pose safety threats. In April, for example, a fire set in a Lindbergh-area encampment frightened residents when it grew, spreading dangerously close to an apartment complex. But homelessness itself is not illegal, and clearing encampments requires a humane and compassionate response.

COVID-19 ushered in a renewed interest in addressing homelessness, as homelessness quickly became a public health emergency as well as a humanitarian concern. 2020 saw unprecedented mobilization efforts to safeguard and quarantine the unsheltered – with plenty of community support and collaboration among social service organizations.

Record numbers of unsheltered neighbors were moved to safety within the "Healthy Hotel" network. Meanwhile, case managers at HOPE Atlanta and other organizations worked 1-1 with them to address the underlying causes of homelessness, resulting in 794 households being re-housed.

LIFT 2.0 is a continuation of these efforts. Administered by Partners for HOME and the Department of Transportation, this collaborative initiative aims to transition 1,500 individuals to permanent housing. The focus is on unsheltered people experiencing chronic homelessness. At HOPE Atlanta, we're proud to partner with Partners for HOME, Project Community Connections Inc. (PCCI), Open Doors Atlanta, The Gateway Center, and others to transform lives and permanently reduce homelessness in our communities.

### LIFT 2.0 ENCAMPMENT DECOMMISSIONING



*As of this writing, LIFT 2.0 has seen more than 257 individuals transition from encampments to permanent housing solutions.*

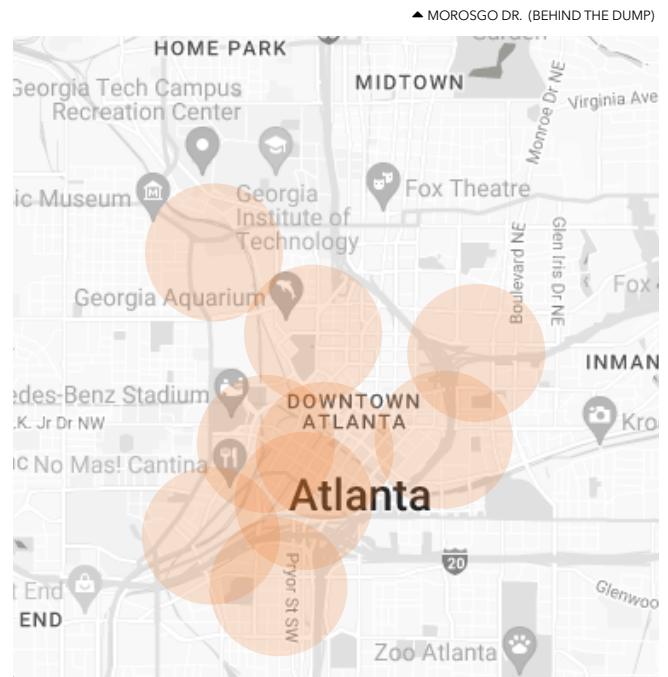
## LIFT 2.0 X HOPE ATLANTA: A PHASED APPROACH

**Outreach.** HOPE Atlanta’s outreach team regularly visits assigned encampments to engage residents and build rapport. Once someone agrees to receive services, we begin working with them to secure identification and other key documents.

**Shelter.** Clients are transitioned to temporary housing within shelters or motels. This provides the stability they need to focus on getting “housing ready,” with support from their dedicated case manager. We assist with social security and SNAP benefit applications while searching for permanent housing that meets their needs.

**Move-In.** HOPE Atlanta helps cover move-in costs and often subsidizes rent for a period of time while a client gets back on their feet. We also arrange for furniture to be delivered (via the Furniture Bank) and provide move-in kits, supplemental grocery boxes, and other essentials when available.

**Wraparound Support.** We stay engaged with clients after move-in, providing the support and resources they need to address the underlying causes of homelessness and reclaim their self-sufficiency. This can include helping them increase their income, securing government benefits, and connecting them with resources to address health issues.



◀ DONALD LEE HOLLOWELL @ 285

### TARGETED ENCAMPMENTS

- 75/85 @ JOHN WESLEY DOBBS
- CENTRAL AVE @ MLK
- PRYOR STREET @ I-20
- 75/85 SB @ CORTLAND
- FREEDOM PARKWAY
- THE HILL
- SPRING STREET
- FORT @ EDGEWOOD
- DONALD LEE HOLLOWELL @ 285
- MOROSGO DR. (BEHIND THE DUMP)

## FROM THE FIELD

As part of the LIFT 2.0 initiative, HOPE Atlanta’s rapid re-housing team works with around 50 clients from encampments at any given time. Most are between the ages of 30 and 50 and have been chronically homeless for years. About a third are women.

While there are plenty of challenges to acquiring housing – like increasingly strict landlord requirements, high rent costs, and keeping transient clients engaged – the team is dedicated to helping each client take the next step toward stability and self-sufficiency.

I BELIEVE EVERYONE  
DESERVES A SAFE,  
CLEAN, DRY PLACE TO LIVE.

It doesn’t matter if they have  
mental health issues or drug  
problems. *It doesn’t matter.*”



KAVIN BRUEN  
Rapid Re-Housing  
Case Manager

# WHAT CAUSES HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING INSECURITY IN ATLANTA?

**CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, IT'S OFTEN DUE TO FACTORS BEYOND PEOPLE'S CONTROL.**

Many people assume homelessness is the result of moral or personal failings. Our staff, who work 1-1 with those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, would tell you otherwise. Increasingly, homelessness and housing insecurity in Georgia are systemic failures.

In Atlanta, only 10% of apartments are affordable to lower-income workers. One in five renters is behind on rent and risks eviction. These issues disproportionately affect minority households. And because so many struggle to make ends meet (and many have little to no savings), a sudden crisis like a health emergency, job loss, or even a broken-down car could increase someone's risk for homelessness.

Other factors that increase people's risk include disabilities and chronic health conditions, mental and substance abuse disorders, domestic violence, and being a veteran.

## WHO WE SERVE

In FY22, we served 7,456 people. Many of them are from special populations, have special needs, or fall into more than one category.



## TAKING ACTION: PREVENTION

The best way to reduce homelessness is by preventing it altogether. HOPE Atlanta works with people awaiting or at risk of eviction to find affordable housing solutions that meet each client's unique needs, providing assistance with rent, utilities, and more while they work to save money and become self-sufficient.

**I'M CREATING A PLAN FOR CLIENTS TO BE SUCCESSFUL LONG TERM,** from money management to food stamps, and even finding jobs. A lot of clients come in and say, *'I have never been in this situation. This is so embarrassing.'* Nobody's situation is embarrassing and you never know when you can fall into one of these situations. **The help is here. *It's available.***

SHAREATH HILL  
Special Needs Housing  
Program Case Manager



# THE FACES OF HOMELESSNESS OF HOPE

Each of these clients – as well as the 7,000+ people HOPE Atlanta served last year – received individualized support and services to help them achieve stability and reclaim their livelihoods. A special thanks to every client who has generously shared their story!

After a bad relationship caused Amberrel to lose her job, apartment, and child, she eventually had no choice but to seek shelter at MARTA.



AMBERREL

As a retired veteran, Reginald lives on a fixed income. A sudden rent increase made it impossible for him to afford rent.



REGINALD

After losing her job, Erica became homeless and spent years living in shelters. She developed anxiety and PTSD, which made achieving stability more difficult.



ERICA

Kari struggled with drug addiction, and was sick and living on the streets when she first sought help from HOPE Atlanta.



BARBARA

Willie's troubles began suddenly when he fell severely ill. He was hospitalized for six months, and by the time he was discharged, he'd lost everything.



WILLY

A series of family tragedies, including the deaths of three of her children and her mother, caused Jackie's life to unravel to the point of homelessness.



JACKIE

# FAMILIES AT RISK

## FAMILY HOMELESSNESS ISN'T ALWAYS VISIBLE. BUT IT'S VERY REAL.

When you think about homelessness, families with children probably isn't the first image that comes to mind. But in the U.S., families with children comprise 11% of the unsheltered population. Countless more are living in precarious housing situations that put them at risk of life on the streets. The number of Americans "doubling up" (sharing housing) has been trending upward; some 3.7 million Americans are doing so, and fragile relationships with hosts or family members can quickly lead to homelessness.

### Families shouldn't have to choose between rent and food.

Besides helping those in need secure housing, HOPE Atlanta provides wraparound services to at-risk households and neighborhoods. This includes hunger relief. When children lose access to free school meals during the summer, these services become particularly critical for lower-income families whose budgets are increasingly squeezed by inflation.

A family with two children receiving free school lunches, for example, saves more than \$100 each month. Without this assistance, that family can expect to spend up to \$500 per month to feed their children over the summer on a thrifty food plan.

**75%**

OF HOMELESS CHILDREN PERFORM BELOW GRADE LEVEL

**25%**

OF HOMELESS PEOPLE SERVED ARE FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

**82%**

OF HOMELESS CHILDREN SAY IT WAS A TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE

### WHAT IS "HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS"?

When it comes to the scope of homelessness in our communities, the people you might see living under bridges or in encampments are the tip of the iceberg. Many more are in highly unstable living situations, invisible to point in time counts and statistics. We call this "hidden homelessness."

#### *Hidden homelessness can look like...*

- A struggling veteran couch-surfing between friends' houses
- A single mom and her children living in a small motel room
- A senior living in an abandoned building not suitable for habitation

## TAKING ACTION: SMART LUNCH, SMART KID

HOPE Atlanta partnered with Fulton County Schools to provide free, nutritious meals for school-aged children and non-perishable food boxes for families. This is a continuation of the Smart Lunch Smart Kid program, which has been a key support system in our communities for more than a decade.

Other wraparound services for struggling households include financial literacy workshops, mental health referrals, assistance with transportation to job interviews and appointments, and more.

**"WE STEP IN TO PROVIDE THESE FAMILIES WITH SECURITY so that they know where they're going to get their meals through the summer months."**

AMY OLVEY  
Director of Community  
Engagement



# SOLVING HOMELESSNESS TAKES A VILLAGE.

## WE CAN ALL PLAY A PART.

Interested in staying in the know  
and learning how you can support  
HOPE Atlanta's mission?

Visit [HOPEAtlanta.org](https://HOPEAtlanta.org) to sign up  
for updates, learn about volunteer  
opportunities, make a donation, and more.

