



FIELD REPORT

Q1 2026

hopeatlanta.org

FROM THE DESK OF JULIO CARRILLO



Dear Atlanta,

There are moments in a city's life when the world is watching.

In 2026, the world will indeed turn its eyes toward Atlanta. Stadiums will fill. Cameras will roll. Visitors will arrive from every continent. But long before the first whistle blows, a deeper question stands before us:

What kind of city are we becoming?

This Field Report tells a story that goes far beyond buildings and events. It is the story of a city choosing dignity over displacement. Coordination over fragmentation. Long-term solutions over short-term optics. It is the story of Atlanta deciding that readiness is not something you switch on for a global moment – it is something you build every day.

At the heart of this report is Waterworks – 100 permanent supportive homes where housing, healthcare, and human dignity meet by design. Not by accident. Not as an afterthought. But intentionally. Through partnership. Through trust. Through the belief that housing is not charity – it is infrastructure.

Through Project HEAL, we are witnessing a profound shift: 80-85% of hospital patients who once would have been discharged back to the street are now discharged into housing. Early data shows up to 40% hospital cost avoidance and an estimated \$2.8 million in annual savings tied to these 100 homes. But beyond the numbers lies something even more powerful – a human truth: when housing stabilizes, health stabilizes. And when health stabilizes, lives begin again.

You will read Jordan's story. A simple sentence stays with me: "Somewhere I know I can lay my head and feel safe." That is what this work is about. Safety. Stability. The quiet dignity of turning a key in your own door.

Together, let's continue building an Atlanta that is ready for the world—and worthy of the people who call it home.

You will also see the ecosystem that makes this possible – Winnwood, Bonaventure, The Melody, and Downtown Rising Outreach. Boots on the ground building trust day after day. Outreach that is not displacement, but sustained engagement. Housing that does not manage homelessness but works to end it.

Most importantly, you will see community in action. Volunteers assembling furniture. Corporate leaders stepping forward. Healthcare partners embedding navigators in discharge planning. The Continuum of Care, led by Partners for HOME, advancing solutions grounded in data, dignity, and coordination. And Mayor Andre Dickens, with a strategic vision and deep affinity to our unhoused neighbors, championing cross-sector collaboration and investing in long-term solutions.

Housing one person strengthens the systems of many.

This is not a moment. This is a *movement*.

As Atlanta Rising continues to take shape, we are building systems designed to persist– not just during FIFA, not just during headlines – long after the spotlight fades. Atlanta knows that true readiness is measured not by what visitors see for a few weeks, but by what our neighbors experience every day.

I invite you to read this report with curiosity. With pride. And with a sense of possibility.

The work described here is proof that homelessness is not intractable. It is solvable when cities choose coordination, compassion, and accountability. When housing becomes the strategy. When dignity becomes the standard.

Atlanta is preparing for the world.

But more importantly, we are preparing for one another.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julio Carrillo', written in a cursive style.

Julio Carrillo, CEO



WATERWORKS

Building a City Where Health, Housing, and Dignity Meet

Waterworks was created to answer a defining question for Atlanta: what does it look like when a city designs housing, health, and dignity together—on purpose?

The answer is a permanent supportive housing community with 100 homes, on-site wraparound services provided by Hope Atlanta, and an integrated physical and mental health care model shaped by years of planning, trust-building, and cross-sector collaboration. Waterworks reflects a shared understanding across the city that housing stability is not just a social service—it is essential infrastructure.

As Atlanta prepares to welcome the world for the FIFA World Cup 2026, this work illustrates what it truly means for a city to be ready.

“Being ‘ready’ isn’t just about stadiums, transit, or hotels. It’s about people,” said Cathryn Vassell, CEO of Partners for Home. “A truly ready city ensures that everyone has a safe place to live and that systems are strong enough to respond with dignity and care.”



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PROJECT HEAL

Where Health and Housing Converge

One of the most innovative elements of Waterworks is Project HEAL, a hospital-led initiative designed to close a long-standing gap between healthcare and homelessness response systems. For years, patients experiencing homelessness were routinely discharged from hospitals back onto the street—often before they were medically stable.

Project HEAL emerged from frontline medical experience and years of collaboration among hospitals, housing providers, and service partners.

“We realized there was a subset of patients who weren’t ready for traditional shelter or family placement,” said Mark Holzberg, a physician leader with Project HEAL. “They needed medical supportive housing with care onsite. No patient should be discharged from a hospital to the street simply because they don’t have a home.”

Today, Project HEAL operates through a hospital housing navigator program embedded in discharge planning and access to medical supportive housing like Waterworks. As a result, 80–85 percent of patients are now discharged to housing instead of the street, a dramatic shift from historic practices.



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“Housing is one of the most powerful social determinants of health,” Dr. Holzberg emphasized. “When people don’t have stable housing, they cycle through emergency rooms again and again. Stabilizing housing alongside health changes everything—for the individual and for the system.”

Early data shows up to 40 percent hospital cost avoidance and an estimated \$2.8 million in annual savings tied to 30 of the 100 homes at Waterworks. But for Project HEAL partners, the most important outcomes are human.

“When individuals are healthy and out of the hospital, they can begin leading productive lives in the community,” Dr. Holzberg said. “As the homelessness population ages, addressing health is no longer optional—it’s essential.”





Where Care Comes to Life

Hope Atlanta's Team on the Ground

At Waterworks, systems only work because people make them real.

Hope Atlanta's on-site team turns policy into practice every day—meeting residents where they are and building trust through consistency, presence, and care. Designed to support individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and complex barriers, the community follows a Housing First approach, layering individualized services around each resident.

“WaterWorks Village is a permanent supportive housing community designed to support individuals with complex needs. By pairing stable housing with consistent, individualized services, residents have the space and support they need to truly rebuild their lives.”

- ABI THOMAS GEORGE,
On-Site Team Member



Residents can access case management, behavioral health services, substance use counseling, psychiatric care, and medication management—all in one place.

“Co-locating services removes so many barriers,” Abi explained. “Residents don't have to navigate multiple systems on their own. Care comes to them, which builds trust and allows us to respond quickly when needs arise.”

According to Kala Farrare, Senior Director of Clinical Operations at Hope Atlanta, integration is key to long-term outcomes.



“When healthcare, behavioral health, and case management are accessible in one place, barriers like transportation, cost, and system navigation disappear. That allows our teams to focus on housing stability, economic mobility, and long-term wellness.”

Over time, staff see a powerful shift. When basic needs are met, residents move from survival mode to thinking about goals—employment, reconnection with family, education, and purpose.



COMMUNITY IN ACTION

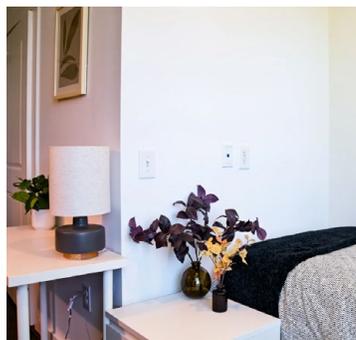
Volunteers Turning Housing Into Home

Waterworks also reflects the power of community engagement. Volunteer days capture the heart of systems change in ways no chart ever could—when neighbors and corporate partners step into newly built apartments and help transform them into welcoming homes.

For volunteers, being part of the final stretch before move-in—assembling furniture, adding finishing touches—creates a tangible connection to the impact of housing stability. These moments reinforce that permanent supportive housing is not just about units, but about dignity, belonging, and shared responsibility. For corporate partners like The RMR Group, volunteering at Waterworks wasn't just about service—it was about alignment.



“As professionals working in residential real estate, we take pride in playing a role in such an essential part of society,” shared Noah Echols. “Partnering with Hope Atlanta for the past five years has been a natural and rewarding experience. Working together to give back creates a shared sense of purpose that bonds our team in a way day-to-day work can't.”



Hands-on service builds empathy, strengthens teams, and reminds the broader community that homelessness solutions work best when people show up together.

For Merritt Dismuke, volunteering at Waterworks was a natural extension of RMR's values.

“Volunteering with Hope Atlanta allows us to show integrity, act with mutual respect, and embrace the power of ‘we,’” Merritt said. “It's a meaningful way to take ownership in creating stability for people facing housing insecurity.”

That sense of ownership came through in how the team showed up—together.

[SEE OUR VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION](#)

[▶ WATCH VIDEO](#)

JORDAN'S STORY

A Place to Call Home



For Jordan P., home means something simple — and everything at once.

“Somewhere I know I can lay my head and feel safe.”

On February 6, 2026, Jordan moved into his own apartment at Waterworks. Walking through the door, he didn't feel uncertain or overwhelmed — it already felt like home. The first thing he was looking forward to? *“Going to sleep.”*

With stability comes possibility. Jordan says having a home has made him feel more confident and secure, and he's already looking ahead to what's next — starting with getting a car and rebuilding his independence.

What carried him through the hardest moments? *“Thinking about my family.”*

Jordan shared that Atlanta feels different from anywhere else he's been.

“Atlanta is the only place I know that does stuff like this...Atlanta is actually helping their homeless people.”





A Coordinated System, Built to Last

Waterworks and Project HEAL are part of Atlanta Rising, the city's strategy to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. That work includes expanding housing pathways, strengthening healthcare coordination, preventing families from entering homelessness, and investing in long-term system infrastructure.

"Strong leadership means coordination, transparency, and outcomes," Cathryn Vassell, CEO of Partners for Home said. "Using data, aligning partners, measuring progress publicly, and staying focused on housing as the end goal—especially in moments of heightened visibility."

Importantly, the coordination being built now is designed to hold—not just during FIFA, but long after the final match is played.

A City Ready for the World—Rooted at Home

As global attention turns to Atlanta, Waterworks offers a clear and grounded answer to what readiness truly means. Not displacement, but pathways. Not short-term fixes, but lasting solutions. Not managing homelessness, but working to end it—through permanent housing, coordinated healthcare, committed staff, and a community willing to show up.

"If global leaders are watching Atlanta in 2026, I hope they see a city that leads with both compassion and coordination—one that chooses housing over crisis, collaboration over fragmentation, and long-term solutions over short-term fixes," said Vassell.

At Waterworks, that vision is already taking shape—through the expertise of healthcare partners, the dedication of Hope Atlanta's staff, the hands of volunteers, and a city choosing dignity for its neighbors, one home at a time.

As Atlanta continues to grow and prepare for moments of global visibility, Waterworks reminds us that readiness is not measured by what the world sees for a few weeks—but by what our neighbors experience every day.



Credit: FIFA/Atlanta Sports Council



"Readiness isn't something you turn on for an event. It's built over time—through strong partnerships, consistent care, and a commitment to showing up for people long before the spotlight arrives."

- ELIZABETH BANKS,
COO, Hope Atlanta

Projects like Waterworks reflect the kind of city Atlanta is choosing to be—one that invests in permanent solutions, supports frontline teams, and centers dignity at every step.

"When housing, healthcare, staff, and community come together, stability becomes possible—and that stability holds," Banks added. "This work isn't about a moment. It's about building systems that last and communities where people can truly heal, belong, and move forward."

Hope Atlanta's work makes one thing unmistakable: lasting change doesn't happen in moments of attention, but in daily acts of coordination, compassion, and commitment to people—every day, in every season.



Housing stability is often discussed as a local issue. In reality, it is foundational to a city's global standing.

A city without safe, stable housing is a city under strain—impacting public health, emergency services, workforce participation, and neighborhood vitality. When people are stably housed with access to services, the entire city benefits.

As Atlanta prepares to welcome the world for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, readiness cannot stop at stadiums and infrastructure. True readiness is about systems—about whether a city can care for its people not just during a global moment, but every day.

HOUSING STABILITY

Place-Based Solutions That Work

Atlanta's homelessness response is not one program or one property. It is a coordinated ecosystem grounded in housing as the solution.

At the center is Hope Atlanta, working alongside Partners for Home and community partners through a Housing First, place-based approach.

That work is visible at:



WATERWORKS

Permanent supportive housing with on-site case management, healthcare access, and wraparound services.



WINNWOOD AT ENGLEWOOD

Safe, dignified housing paired with intensive support for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.



BONAVENTURE

Housing focused on stability, accountability, and forward movement.



THE MELODY

Rapid housing micro-units repurposed from shipping containers.



When someone moves into housing at Winnwood or Waterworks, the system strengthens:

- Shelter beds open for those newly in crisis.
- Encampments decrease through service-connected transitions.
- Emergency room visits and jail interactions decline.
- Outreach teams can focus on the next neighbor still outside.

*Housing one person
strengthens the
systems of many.*





BOOTS ON THE GROUND

Downtown Rising Outreach

If supportive housing is the infrastructure, Downtown Rising Outreach (pictured) is the connective tissue.

This boots-on-the-ground effort meets people where they are—on sidewalks, in transit hubs, and in encampments across Downtown. Outreach teams build trust, complete assessments, assist with documentation, reunify individuals with family when possible, and guide them into permanent housing at sites like Winnwood and Waterworks.

This is not displacement. It is sustained engagement.

And when outreach successfully moves someone into housing, capacity is created across the system—freeing shelter beds, reducing pressure on crisis services, and strengthening Atlanta’s ability to respond to future need.

“Outreach isn’t a one-time interaction—it’s sustained engagement. Our teams build relationships over days, weeks, sometimes months. That boots-on-the-ground presence is what turns possibility into placement and crisis into stability.”



-ADAM HAWKINS,
Director of Outreach &
Emergency Services

Housing as Economic and Civic Infrastructure

Permanent supportive housing is humanitarian work—but it is also sound economic policy.

Stable housing reduces public system costs, strengthens workforce participation, improves neighborhood vitality, and signals to global partners that Atlanta leads with both compassion and coordination.

As Atlanta prepares for 2026, investments in permanent supportive housing are not separate from global readiness—they are central to it.

A city that can coordinate outreach, move people into housing, reunify families, and maintain supportive services is a city demonstrating resilience. It proves that growth does not require displacement—and that visibility does not require optics over outcomes.

Heroes for Hope

OCTOBER 8, 2026 FLOURISH ATLANTA

HEROES FOR HOPE 2026

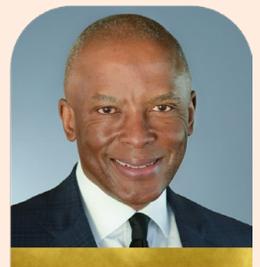
A Night of Action and Hope

As the spotlight shines on Atlanta in 2026, Heroes for Hope will highlight the leadership and partnerships ensuring our city is strong from the inside out.

On October 8, civic, corporate, and nonprofit leaders will gather for a very special Heroes for Hope gala — a cornerstone of Hope Atlanta’s mission to prevent and end homelessness. This is more than a celebration. It is a powerful reflection of how Atlanta Rising is translating vision into measurable community impact.

We are proud to recognize Chris Womack, Chairman, President, and CEO of Southern Company, as our 2026 Individual Hero.

As an Atlanta Rising campaign co-chair, Chris Womack represents what is possible when corporate leadership aligns with community impact. His commitment reflects a broader movement across sectors — one that understands housing stability as essential civic and economic infrastructure.



We will also honor Rocky Atkins, Hope Atlanta Board Chair, as our Volunteer Hero. Rocky’s steadfast leadership and dedication to mission-driven governance embody the volunteer spirit that fuels this work every day. We are finalizing our 2026 Corporate Hero and look forward to making an announcement soon.

Guiding the evening as Co-Chairs are Rose J. Hunter Jones of Hilgers PLLC and Dr. Kofi Smith of Keystone Management — leaders whose cross-sector collaboration reflects the very model Atlanta Rising champions.

Heroes for Hope is not simply a gala. It is a night of celebration, connection, and community impact — where leaders recommit to solutions that prioritize permanent housing, coordinated outreach, and long-term stability.



Interested in Becoming a Sponsor?

If you want to support Heroes for Hope and help continue Hope Atlanta’s mission to end homelessness in Atlanta, contact Vivien Dumford:

vdumford@hopeatlanta.org

[LEARN MORE](#)