



*Providing dynamic, proactive leadership that engages policy makers and the community to end homelessness.*

### District #1 Town Hall Questions, July 18, 2015 at High Pointe Baptist Church

1. I have been working with some homeless people. I have learned that just at one location, there are 35 homeless people in this north area of our district. Are there plans to address this growing homeless problem? Citywide?
  - a. *Yes, ECHO and its community partners continue to work to identify social service and housing resources needed to help individuals experiencing homelessness and will continue to do so until no one in our community experiences homelessness. While there are many individuals experiencing homelessness every day in our community, we are seeing a 6% decline based on the annual Point in Time Count (HUD required local homeless census count) data <http://austinecho.org/about-homelessness/homeless-data/>. In the past year, the non-profit community focused on ending homelessness has been working together to develop a system to address the housing needs of each person or family experiencing homeless as quickly as possible. Since last October, we have assessed over 1,915 people who need help some type of housing assistance yet as a community, we've only been able to house 130. We understand that the greatest challenge to ending homelessness in Austin is the lack of available and affordable rental units. We are working with community leadership to identify strategies to address this housing crisis so that our community can support the housing need for all of its residents. With the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, Mayor Adler is championing the cause to help find apartments for homeless veterans, and we will continue working to locate apartments and support services for all those in need until everyone in the community has a safe and stable home. To find out more information, please visit the [OneKeyATX](#) site.*
2. Number of beds for homeless in community are not adequate for the number of homeless. No shelters in North Austin. Good work to assess but a list (waiting list) can take years to get a bed.
  - a. *ECHO is committed to increasing the number of rental units available for families and individuals experiencing homelessness. Our immediate goal is to develop 400 units of permanent supportive housing as well as secure funding to increase rapid rehousing programs. While developing new housing is not an immediate solution, ECHO is*

*advocating and engaging local property owners to work with supportive housing programs to increase our current stock to meet the housing need.*

3. Does ATC IC have standards for owners to meet before a federal voucher is used for a person? What will code violations do?
  - a. *The Housing Authority for the City of Austin and the Travis County Housing Authority issue the HUD Housing Choice Vouchers. They do require a habitability standard inspection for any units accepting vouchers. For more information please visit their websites: [www.hacanet.org](http://www.hacanet.org) and <http://www.hatctx.com/>*
4. What happened to restitution centers? (from follow up conversations this is regarding centers from the 80's and 90's where convicted people could be placed rather than prison/jail and have a reentry program and experience.)-
  - a. *Answered by Kelly Nichols*
5. Libraries and Homelessness. Do library staff and management undergo sensitivity training about this special population?
  - a. *We are currently not aware of any specific training for library staff. However, in early August, the Terrazas Branch Library hosted a free screening of the film "[The Homestretch](#)" documentary to raise awareness about the experiences of homelessness. The Terrazas Library staff stated that they do provide staff sensitivity training and offer writing classes to the community which includes students experiencing homelessness. During the July 2015 National Alliance to End Homelessness Conference in Washington, DC, Austin community staff attended an excellent workshop about successful library programs that are affective at helping folks experiencing homelessness that access the facility. We are learning more about these strategies would learn more about what libraries are offering throughout the city and county to see if we can improve our partnership.*
6. As gentrification continues to change the landscapes of Austin, is the plan to move on undesirables further east or completely out of Austin? In 24 years Austin will be 200 years old, can we imagine Austin curing these issues? (Homelessness)
  - a. *ECHO's goal is to end homelessness as we know it by 2020. In the Austin community where the cost of housing is increasing on a daily basis, we understand the great challenge we have to maintain truly affordable housing in this climate of change and gentrification. We will continue to implement strategies to increase housing options for persons experiencing homelessness and work to increase resources to Austin residents struggling to maintain housing to ensure everyone has a safe and stable home.*
7. The voucher programs are not fair because majority of the time there is no limit in duration. Can a limit be set to give encouragement to others? What will become of the homeless population

of this city, after ARC is torn down? Where will they be located? Will they still have an opportunity for medical treatment, to see other doctors for medical or mental problems? Will they have consulting to help them get out of the chronic situation they are in?

- a. *ECHO works to end chronic homelessness by securing permanent supportive housing for individuals and families. Based on data collected through the coordinated assessment, roughly 30% of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness will need on-going housing subsidy (voucher) and case management support to maintain stable housing. Households that are assessed that need less intensive housing support to maintain housing (roughly 55% of current population) are referred to Rapid Rehousing programs (time-limited financial and support services to help individuals maintain housing) or one-time assistance through Diversion.*
- b. *ECHO is not aware of any plans to demolish the ARCH or any other downtown housing crisis resources. We continue to advocate for an increase of permanent supportive housing for persons experiencing chronic homelessness and other evidence based permanent housing support interventions. Emergency shelter like the ARCH provides a critical emergency housing crisis intervention/shelter for those experiencing homelessness in the downtown Austin area.*
- c. *ECHO partners are developing stronger ties to healthcare programs to ensure that all clients in housing and in shelter, have access to affordable healthcare. In addition to the ARCH medical clinic, the [CommUnity Care](#) Street Medicine team provides comprehensive medical services to individuals sleeping outside and in campsites around the area. In addition, ATCIC Healthy Community Collaborative has expanded staff available to provide comprehensive behavioral health services and housing for people experiencing homelessness.*

For more information, please visit our website at [www.austinecho.org](http://www.austinecho.org)

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