

## An Exploration of Housing Services in Tempe, Arizona / Mia Bazbaz

### Abstract

This study is organized into a brief examination of the resources available to the unhoused population in Tempe, especially zip code 85281, and the potential to streamline outreach and other services across the city. This study uses data from public records to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches to connecting unhoused individuals to housing services.

### Introduction

This investigation attempts to summarize the resources provided by the City of Tempe and nonprofit organizations based in Tempe. Further, it attempts to explain the role that trust plays in programs that may serve the unhoused community, including but not limited to outreach and resource distribution programs, temporary shelters, and health care. It primarily examines the services provided by the City of Tempe and two Tempe-based nonprofits, AZ Hugs and the ARIS Foundation. Ultimately, this study recommends how these organizations can streamline their resources to assist the unhoused community best.

### Research Question

To what extent are resources for the unhoused population utilized within the city of Tempe?

### Literature Review

The United States experiences what sociologists refer to as a housing crisis, affordability crisis, and eviction crisis. Conservative estimates state that at least one in four American families dedicate over 70 percent of their income to paying rent (Desmond, 2016). Sociologists explain that a lack of stable housing severs trust relationships throughout society, from neighborhoods and communities to local governments and their citizens. For two reasons, Gerhard and Keller (2022) explain that stable housing is the center of urban trust relations. First, the home is where residents develop social ties, feelings of security, and trust relationships that reach beyond the home space. Second, governments historically built institutional trust by providing affordable public housing. There can be no right to the city without stable housing; people need a space to experience security and privacy to partake in public life (Gerhard & Keller, 2023).

In the realm of social services, sociologists explain that trust is a foundational element of the exchanges between social housing providers and the state (Cowan & Morgan, 2009). When institutional trust deteriorates,

non-governmental organizations fulfill the need for affordable housing (Gerhard & Keller, 2023). Cowan and Morgan explain that tensions between the state and social housing providers may arise. Social housing norms prioritizing serving those most in need can conflict with a contractual obligation to make estates sustainable for long-term use. These tensions can be improved as different organizations work side-by-side to understand the constraints by which the other organization has to operate, thereby forging trust between social housing providers and the state.

### Methodology

This ethnographic study uses telephone interviews to collect data about the ARIS Foundation and AZ Hugs. It relies upon observations of the Tempe Mental Health Court and outreach events hosted by AZ Hugs to evaluate community responses. Further, this study tracks news coverage of recent regulations for outreach programs. It draws upon testimonies in the news to supplement firsthand observations and conversations.

### Results/Findings:

The City of Tempe faces two significant limitations to the effective use of its resources: first, limited staff, and second, conflicting obligations to the residents of Tempe. Meanwhile, AZ Hugs and the ARIS Foundation face similar limitations of finite donation-based funding and lack of permanent infrastructure, as their weekly outreach events take place in public spaces. The City of Tempe has an obligation to maintain sustainable use of public spaces, but permits and fines can present a barrier to access to organizations such as nonprofits and churches that serve the unhoused community. When outreach events halt due to financial barriers or organizations face fines, the trust relationship between the unhoused community and the city deteriorates.

### Conclusion:

To most effectively utilize their resources, the City of Tempe and Tempe-based nonprofits should centralize their resources in one or more approved locations. Streamlining resources will allow all organizations to maximize their outreach and manpower. Further, the City of Tempe can take advantage of weekly outreach events hosted by nonprofits to maximize the impact of their resources and build upon established trust networks within the unhoused community.

## References

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