Homeless Strategies & Operations Update

Austin Homeless Strategies & Operations | November 4, 2026

David Gray, Director

Storage Expansion

Update

Violet KeepSafe Storage (VKS) Expansion Updates

- **Purpose:** Austin Community Court is evaluating how to use a **one-time $500,000** allocation to expand storage options for people experiencing homelessness
- **Engagement to Date:**
  - Austin Homelessness Advisory Council, Violet KeepSafe Storage Staff, Texas Harm Reduction Alliance, VOCAL-TX
  - Homeless Strategies & Operations – Ongoing coordination to ensure storage options meet the needs of individuals engaged through HEM efforts
- **Key Insight:** Feedback highlights need for **accessible, secure, and sustainable storage solutions** that meet diverse needs and support people at different stages of stability
- **Storage Service Options:**
  - Through nonprofit community partner
  - Through established storage providers
- **Implementation Planning:** Exploring a mini-grant process to fund nonprofit partners

Street & Community Outreach

Overview and Update

Street & Community Outreach (SCO) Program Overview

Reduce Morbidity & Premature Mortality	Identify Pathways to Safety and Housing	Improve Our Response to Unsheltered Homelessness

Assess Needs	HSO SCO will conduct an initial, individualized client needs assessment to identify urgent concerns and prioritize service provision
Distribute Supplies	Meet the immediate survival needs of residents experiencing unsheltered homelessness by distributing supplies (hygiene, inclement weather supplies, bus passes, naloxone) in compliance with local and state laws
Coordinate Services & Referrals	HSO SCO staff will connect clients to healthcare resources, navigation, diversion, shelter, and other community assets
Increase Stability	Support clients to sustain connection and engagement over time, with the intention of improving quality of life and achieving positive housing outcomes

Community Collaboration & Partnerships

To ensure an effective and consistent outreach response to unsheltered homelessness, HSO is developing a citywide, coordinated effort with other outreach service providers, including but not limited to the Homeless Outreach Street Team (HOST) and Austin Community Court mobile court program.

- **Ongoing – Weekly Coordination Calls:**
  - A time and place for system partners to share information, resources, and gain knowledge
  - HSO SCO is intentionally building relationships, fostering collaboration, and improving the quality of service to clients and our community
- **Happening Now – Biweekly Housing "Be On the Look Out" (BOLO) & Engagement Review:**
  - In collaboration with ECHO, these meetings will focus on locating and engaging clients who have been referred to or enrolled in housing programs through the Coordinated Entry process
  - This has now been incorporated in the weekly coordination calls
- **Happening Now – Weekly Case Conferencing:**
  - Intended to facilitate collaborative review of clients with complex needs
  - Will establish continuity of care, coordinate multi-system intervention, reduce service duplication, and accelerate outcomes

Coordination with Homeless Encampment Management

Outreach is a vital step in the homeless encampment management process. SCO staff attend weekly HEM Planning & HEM Logistic meetings to ensure awareness of upcoming encampment abatements, and to schedule engagement of unhoused residents before vacate notices are posted. This coordinated approach helps to minimize the destabilizing effects of displacement.



- **Geographic Coverage:**
  - The HSO SCO program is designed to have 3 teams, with 2 staff assigned to each
  - Coverage will be divided into North, Central, and South areas
  - Geographic assignment ensures staff and service provider consistency and enhanced familiarity with partners, neighborhoods, and clients
  - Assignment aligns with Homeless Encampment Management's geographic areas
- **Process Update:**
  - HSO SCO are in the process of hiring and training staff to consistently operate with geographic coordination

Public Space Management

Overview

Public Space Management Overview

- Works with multiple City Departments and external partners to coordinate encampment responses
- Provides assessment of the encampments on public property in the City of Austin
- Works with City of Austin Code Enforcement when encountering encampments on privately owned property
- Coordinates the clearing and cleaning of encampments



Encampment before HEM cleaning - South Austin, 2026

Public Space Management Team Overview

- Goal of clearing and cleaning the location to restore to original condition
- If the encampment has active residents, connect the individuals to outreach for access to resources before any enforcement or cleaning is scheduled
- Once Outreach is complete, the Public Space Management team provides 72-hour notice of pending closure of new sites, and 24-hour notice for Keep Clear Sites
- Life & Safety: During disasters, the team is also sent out to assist with notification of potential weather disasters such as flash flooding or high wildfire risk



Homeless encampment located in the East Austin area, 2026

Homeless Encampment Management

Overview and Update

Homeless Encampment Management Overview

Homeless Encampment Management (HEM):

- The HEM process exists to address encampment cleanup responses across the city in a consistent process to help reduce health and safety risks at high-priority sites, while maintaining public spaces and connecting individuals to services
- The process was created to comply with Proposition B and Texas Penal Code 48.05, while ensuring cleanup responses are human-centric and trauma-informed



Encampment abatement in Central Austin, 2026

HEM Process


1
2
3
4
5
6
Identification
Austin 3-1-1 service requests, staff reports, etc.
Assessment
health, safety, environment
Prioritization
balancing risk and capacity
Outreach
engagement of individuals
Notification
advanced notice of abatement
Abatement
enforcement, cleanup, restoration

Prioritizing Locations for HEM Baseline Operations

Criteria include:

- Former Housing-Focused Encampment Assistance Link (HEAL) Initiative sites
- Life safety risk (flood/fire/traffic)
- Austin 3-1-1 service requests and elevations

Other factors include, but are not limited to:

- Population health
- Subpopulations (e.g., kids, seniors)
- Proximity to sensitive locations (e.g., schools)
- Environmental impacts and hazards (e.g., fire/flood risk, environmentally sensitivity)
- Number of individuals in campsite
- Illicit activity/behavior



Encampment abatement in Central Austin, 2026

Operational Changes

Change in cleanup staffing model:

- HEM 4 – Roadways
  - Austin Resource Recovery has replaced Austin Transportation & Public Works

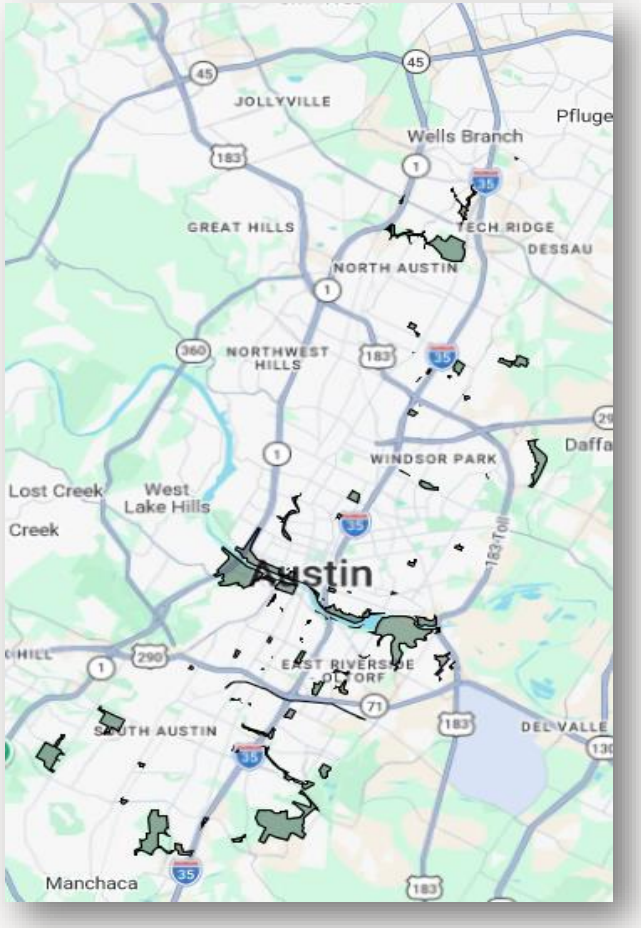
Change in operational support:

- Austin Emergency Management is no longer supporting data collection; HSO is collecting data internally
- Dedicated staff increase – Hiring and training three full-time staff to strengthen operational support in the Public Space Management Team



Encampment abatement in Southeast Austin, 2026

Keep Clear Map



HSO launched a new Keep Clear Map to document where the HEM Process has been completed, indicating where camping will be quickly abated.

For a site to become designated as Keep Clear, the location has gone through the HEM process. The HEM teams will continue to visit the Keep Clear Sites.

Find the interactive map at austintexas.gov/homelessness or scan the QR code

HEM Quarterly Outcome Updates

June 8, 2026 – September 30, 2026

- **Site Visits:** 2,347 visits to sites by HEM Teams (include repeated visits)
- **Unique Sites Visited:** 653 distinct sites visited by HEM teams
- **Debris Removal:** 732.27 tons (1,464,540 pounds) of debris collected and removed by HEM teams
- **Shelter Connections:** 136 individual unique individuals connected to shelter
- **Supportive Services Connections:** 84 individuals unique individuals connected to supportive services
- **Shelter/Service Acceptance:** 45% of individuals connected to shelter or services out of 493 contacted
- **Citations:** 50 unique individuals received a citation
- **Arrests:** 5 unique individuals arrested
- **Workload:** 2,906 homeless encampment service requests received by 3-1-1
- **Response Timeliness:** 3.2 days to respond to 3-1-1 homeless encampment service requests
- **Repeat Activity:** 24% of encampment sites remained clear of any return activity following abatement and closure

Note: The next data upload will include all data for the first quarter of FY27; release scheduled for early 2027

HEM Comprehensive Outcome Data

May 11, 2026 – September 30, 2026

- **Site Visits:** 2,803 visits to sites by HEM Teams (include repeated visits)
- **Unique Sites Visited:** 780 distinct sites visited by HEM teams
- **Debris Removal:** 1,035.89 tons (2,071,780 pounds) of debris collected and removed by HEM teams
- **Shelter Connections:** 171 individual unique individuals connected to shelter
- **Supportive Services Connections:** 93 individuals unique individuals connected to supportive services
- **Shelter/Service Acceptance:** 45% of individuals connected to shelter or services out of 581 contacted
- **Citations:** 55 unique individuals received a citation
- **Arrests:** 5 unique individuals arrested
- **Workload:** 3,758 homeless encampment service requests received by 3-1-1
- **Response Timeliness:** 4.05 days to respond to 3-1-1 homeless encampment service requests
- **Repeat Activity:** 24% of encampment sites remained clear of any return activity following abatement and closure

Quarterly Resource Allocation Information

- The total HEM Initiative cost for June 8, 2026, to September 30, 2026, was $2,261,819.13.
  - The average cost per site visit this reporting period was $963.71, which is a 39% decrease from the prior reporting period ($1,577.55 per site visit).
- The greatest portions of all costs were fixed costs: staff salaries (71%) and contractors (23%)
  - Funding for staff positions are already within departments' budgets for cleanup or related activities
  - These resources cannot be shifted to pay for social services or housing

Quarterly Expense Summary by Department

City Department	Total Costs
Austin Police	$505,944.66
Austin Resource Recovery	$502,999.83
Austin Transportation & Public Works	$457,374.28
Austin Watershed Protection	$389,654.71
Austin Homeless Strategies & Operations	$300,240.84
Austin Parks & Recreation	$105,604.81
TOTALS	**$2,261,819.13**

Quarterly Expense Summary by Category

Expenditure Category	Total Cost	Share of Cost
Salaries	$1,602,560.14	70.9%
Contractors	$517,708.99	22.9%
Equipment	$125,886.58	5.6%
Disposal	$15,553.42	0.7%
TOTALS	**$2,261,819.13**	**100%**

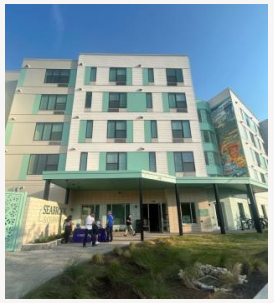
Advancing Our Homelessness Response System

HSO remains committed to expanding shelter, coordinating services and providing housing opportunities:

- **Expanding Shelter Capacity**
  The opening of 100 additional shelter beds at Esperanza Community, supported by City investments
- **Strengthening Cross-System Coordination**
  Through the No Wrong Door initiative, the City is working with community partners to better coordinate services for individuals navigating mental health, homelessness, and criminal justice systems
- **Expanding Permanent Supportive Housing**
  Additional Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) communities opened since June 2026, supported by City investments:
  - Seabrook Square II (60 PSH units)
  - Cairn Point Cameron (100 PSH units)



Esperanza Community shelter unit



Seabrook Square II



Cairn Point Cameron

Questions?

Thank You!

Austin Homeless Strategies & Operations