

July 2021

The Scope

Bigger Vision Of Athens Monthly Newsletter



Our Mission:

To provide a safe and comfortable place for those in homelessness in Athens, Georgia, as they navigate the path towards sustainable housing.

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Bigger Vision Highlight:

Athens Government Takes Action on Homeless Camps

The homeless population in Athens is difficult to quantify, but it has grown during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of those who are homeless spend the night hours in camps that they create, without permission, on public or private property. The reasons that they are on the street are multiple, and include:

- The shelters are full and turn dozens of people away every day.
- Some of the homeless cannot go to a shelter because they have been banned due to past failures to follow the rules.
- Many of the homeless are not willing to stay in a shelter because they don't like the rules, and this is sometimes caused by mental illness, substance abuse, or both.

Many landowners, including the city, in the wake of the expanded campsites over the past year, have had enough and have taken steps to

expel the homeless from the camps. This includes a series of camps on CSX Railroad property along Willow St. near our center. It is thought that there were in excess of 25 people at those camps, and CSX has informed the city that all of those residents must be moved by August. The Athens-Clark County government requested an extension, and the date was extended to September.

At the last commission meeting, a resolution was passed that Athens-Clark County would identify public property in Athens that would be used to establish a government funded camp, though it is hoped that some private entities will donate time, money, or services to the effort. This camp will also be quite different in that services would be present on site, including toilets, showers, and security. Tents, food, and supplies would also be available at the camp. Rules would be developed and enforced. The commission resolution required the county to identify a site by mid-July, and that one or more private homeless providers would be asked to manage the site's development and operations, after a proposal process.

To assist in this effort, the Athens Homeless Coalition, of which Bigger Vision is a member, volunteered to establish a committee on the encampment issue that would not have decision-making authority, but advise the county using the collective knowledge of the coalition members on the committee. Bigger Vision of Athens' Executive Director, Steven Mason, is on that committee, which met for the first time on July 1st, 2021, via Zoom.

The committee made some progress, but many of the details and decisions cannot be made until some key decisions are made by the county. For one thing, it is not known whether the site will be a vacant field, a property with buildings that must be torn down, or a building that, with or without renovation, could be used to house the homeless inside.

Once the site is identified, ACC government officials will issue a Request For Proposal that will have the basics of what the project will look like. Depending upon the specifics of the RFP, Bigger Vision may be interested in submitting a proposal ourselves.

However, a genuine concern by all parties is the short time frame. The complexity of this project and the number of stakeholders that must be involved translates into a lengthy process that is unlikely to result in a camp ready to take on residents by mid-September.

One final note is that everyone is anticipating that the federal monies associated with the Rescue/Infrastructure bills that have been signed into law or are being negotiated will pay for more transitional housing, permanent housing, and jobs programs, which would actually reduce the number of homeless.

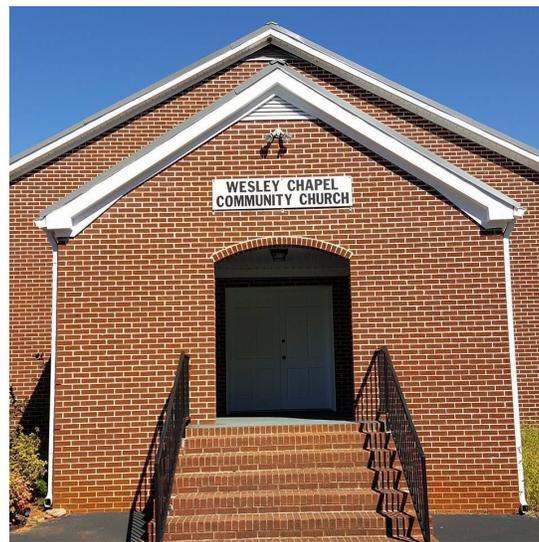
After all, moving individuals experiencing homelessness from one camp to a better camp with more resources does not solve the overall problem or reduce the number of homeless individuals.

Steven Mason
Executive Director

Donor Spotlight of the Month:

This month, Bigger Vision would like to honor **Wesley Chapel Community Church** for their continued support of individuals experiencing homelessness in Athens-Clarke County. For years, Wesley Chapel has provided dinner to our guests on the third Thursday of each month. In addition, Wesley Chapel has stepped in during evenings where no dinner has been scheduled, and brought enough food to serve each and every guest. With the help of community supporters like Wesley Chapel, Bigger Vision is able to continue providing services to our community.

THANK YOU so much for your help!



Volunteer Opportunities:

Due to COVID-19, we reduced volunteer opportunities to better ensure everyone's safety, but we still need volunteers! **Starting in July**, Bigger Vision will begin welcoming a limited amount of volunteers in the morning and evening times to assist staff and guests with a variety of tasks. All staff and volunteers are required to wear a mask while guests are present in the building. New, exciting volunteer opportunities will be continue to added as normal volunteering resumes! Sign up to become a:

Meal Provider Volunteer

- In a group or individually, plan & prepare, or purchase a meal for a minimum of 40 guests.
- Deliver & drop off the meal at Bigger Vision between 5:00-5:30pm.
- Usually, we would ask volunteers to serve the meal to the guests but due to COVID-19 we ask that they only drop off the meal.

Morning Volunteer

- Answering the phone
- Answering the questions of guests that ring the doorbell
- Filing
- Project Research

Evening Volunteer

- Assisting staff with guest check-ins
- Assisting guests with minor issues
- Help facilitate smooth dinner process
- Build relationships with guests through conversations and games
- Provide encouragement and offer advice when requested

[Learn More](#)

Opportunities for Financial Donations:

Bed Sponsorship Program: While any donation is greatly appreciated, we have a goal of raising enough money to sponsor all of the beds for the guests of our overnight stay program. One night's stay includes two meals, a shower/laundry, and any basic necessities a guest may need. Please email Director@BiggerVisionOfAthens.org or go to our website if you are interested in donating to one of our three commitment tiers:

BRONZE LEVEL



Bronze Bed Sponsorship: \$20/Monthly Commitment

Contributions are recognized with:
Standard magnet with chosen name on bed & recognition on the Bigger Vision of Athens website & social media

1 bed for 1 night each month

SILVER LEVEL



Silver Bed Sponsorship: \$250/Monthly Commitment

Contributions are recognized with:
Custom magnet with chosen name, a photo op with you/your group, & recognition on the Bigger Vision of Athens website & social media

1 bed for 182 nights each year

GOLD LEVEL



Gold Bed Sponsorship: \$500/Monthly Commitment

Contributions are recognized with:
Stand-alone custom magnet with chosen name & logo on bed, a photo-op with you/your group, & recognition on the Bigger Vision of Athens website & social media

1 bed for 365 nights each year

PayPal – Using PayPal, you will be able to contribute as a one time donation, or as a monthly contribution to the Bed Sponsorship program through the link on our [website](#).

Check – If your check represents a Bed Sponsorship, please indicate so in the memo line. Either drop them off in-person M-F between 9am-4pm, or mail it to:
The Bigger Vision of Athens, Inc.,
P.O. Box 8022, Athens, GA 30603

Other Opportunities: If the bed sponsorship program isn't right for you,

we appreciate one-time donations as well (through the avenues listed above), or have the option for you to donate while also shopping for your groceries, or shopping online:

Amazon Smile – When using [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/smile) (instead of Amazon.com), a percentage of every purchase you make will be donated to Bigger Vision of Athens if you select our organization.

Kroger Plus – Activate [Kroger Community Rewards](#) to donate a percentage of every purchase you make using your Kroger Plus card to BVOA if you select our organization.

Creative Ways to Donate: Here are some fun ways to get your network involved in your support of Bigger Vision!



Facebook Fundraiser
Have a birthday coming up? Try out the Facebook Fundraising tool and ask friends and family to pitch in to support Bigger Vision!



Club Donation
Are you part of a local club or organization? Ask fellow members to chip in and send a group donation to Bigger Vision!



Car Wash
Looking for a fun way to raise donations and keep cool in the heat? Have a car wash, and donate a portion of your earnings!

Opportunities for Item Donations:

Amazon Registry: Our supply of items fluctuates, so we keep a list of items we currently need on [Amazon](#).

This month's **highest** needs:

- **BLANKETS (URGENT)**
- Disposable Water Bottles
- Assorted Snacks
- Socks

COVID-19 Shelter Updates:

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, we modified our services to better serve those experiencing homelessness in our community including:

- In line with the most recent CDC approved COVID-19 protocol regarding emergency shelters, we have capped our bed capacity at 24 (a reduction from our usual 34 guests, but up from the 17 we've been able to serve) to allow for appropriate distancing.
- Offering a limited number of to-go dinners each day.
- Offering afternoon showers & laundry from 1:00pm to 4:00pm Thursday-Sunday

Words from the Director

"Bigger Vision is working diligently with the county and our community partners to develop tools and strategies regarding the development of the new camp"

Steven Mason
Executive Director

Upcoming Events

- by appointment.
- Guests are having their temperature checked, are asked to sanitize their hands & are required to wear a mask.
- In the case of exposure to the virus, we will close the shelter until we deem it safe to return.

Stay tuned for events later this year!



FAQ:

Is Bigger Vision involved with planning the future campsite?

- Yes! Bigger Vision's Executive Director, Steven Mason, is a member of the Encampment Committee, which is focused on helping advance solutions that will eventually be used in the development of the legal campsite.

Is Bigger Vision bringing back volunteers at full capacity?

- No, but starting in July Bigger Vision will be allowing a minimal number of volunteers in the morning and evening hours to assist staff and guests with a variety of needs.

How do I sign up to volunteer?

- If you are interested in volunteering with Bigger Vision, visit our [GivePulse](#) page and sign up! [GivePulse](#) allows our organization to effectively manage and interact with our volunteers. If you have any questions, please email fundraising.biggervision@gmail.com for assistance.

Connect with us

Bigger Vision of Athens, Inc. | 706-340-6062 | [Volunteer](#) | [Website](#)

