



## # Homeless Help

Homelessness has become an enormous issue recently, especially in areas where gentrification is hugely relevant. In February 2018, there were approximately 3,605 homeless people in Houston. Nearly 1 in every 430 people are homeless in Houston, compared to 1 in every 135 people in Denver, and 1 in every 126 people in San Francisco. So while Houston is doing a great job with the homelessness problem, there is still room for improvement.

|          | All<br>Americans   | Americans<br>In Poverty | Homeless<br>Americans |
|----------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Children | 73,647,000         | 14,509,000              | 120,819               |
| Adults   | <u>244,807,000</u> | <u>28,615,000</u>       | <u>429,109</u>        |
| Total    | 318,454,000        | 43,124,000              | 549,928               |

The problem in cities like San Francisco and New York is the price for building affordable housing. The average price per square foot in San Francisco is \$1,185, and \$1,773 for New York City, while Houston sits at a measly \$161. And not only does Houston have the advantage of cost, but area too. NYC's area sits just above 300 square miles; San Francisco is only 47 square miles while Houston trumps both cities at 627 square miles. So with housing 10x less expensive than New York City, and having 13x more space than San Francisco, building affordable shouldn't be as much of a problem.

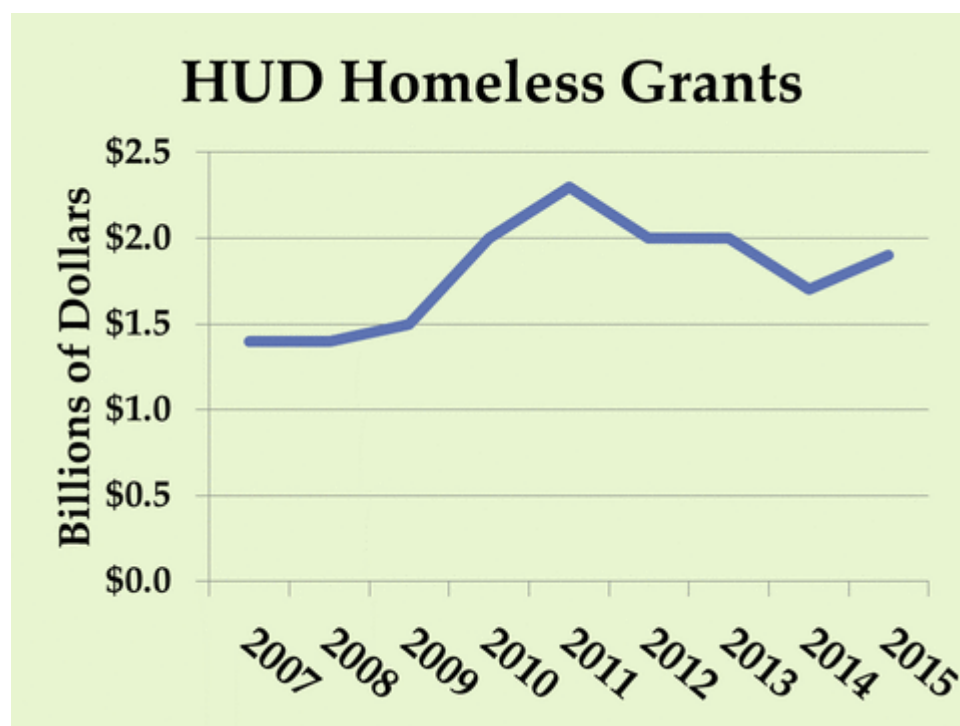
According to The Atlantic, the most significant reason people stay homeless is that it doesn't allow them to develop a sense of 'permanency' as permanency allows people to get the help they need to find jobs and get sober. Moreover, while emergency shelters help provide many people a roof over their head and place to sleep, they are far more expensive compared to vouchers for permanent housing (\$4,819/month compared to \$1,162/month). Also, this works, once Utah implemented the

'housing-first' strategy, they decreased their chronically-homeless population by 72% between 2005 and 2014.

However, our efforts shouldn't stop just in building affordable housing. Along with housing-first, we need to provide the resources homeless people need to get out of homelessness. When people are homeless, they don't have time to take up all the problems they have: drugs and alcohol, health-related issues, fighting against mental disabilities. Once they get the permanent housing they need, they can start combating these problems. Similarly, just because they can start tackling these problems doesn't mean the outreach should stop. We should help them find work, places to get help with their issues, and even at times check-in with them to see if everything is going well.

So the solution to homeless for Houston seems to point to not only providing affordable housing but giving resources to help the homeless as well. That's why I created Homeless Help, to help homeless people find affordable housing, as well as provide them with the resources to get out of homelessness.

The overall problem is over time, costs for these programs are increasing, yet funding has remained approximately constant.



So as overall funding has stayed the same, we'll have to figure out a way to either become more efficient with the funding we currently have or find new ways to increase the financing of these programs. Either way, affordable housing with these wraparound services are the best ways to tackle the homelessness problem in Houston.

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#### Sources:

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- <http://www.homelesshouston.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/2012NeedsAssessmentReport-Aug23.pdf>
- <http://www.homelesshouston.org/coalition-faq/how-many-people-are-homeless-in-the-houston-area/>
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