UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

A FALL 2017 COLLABORATIVE REPORT OF ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY'S PROJECT CITIES & THE CITY OF APACHE JUNCTION
This report represents original work prepared for the City of Apache Junction by students participating in courses aligned with Arizona State University’s Project Cities program. Findings, information, and recommendations are those of students and are not necessarily of Arizona State University. Student reports are not peer reviewed for statistical or computational accuracy, or comprehensively fact-checked, in the same fashion as academic journal articles. Project partners should use care when using student reports as justification for future actions. Text and images contained in this report may not be used without permission from Project Cities.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PART 1

**GET ACQUAINTED WITH THE PROJECT**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Foreword from Apache Junction’s Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>About Project Cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>About Apache Junction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Map of Apache Junction and Greater Phoenix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Course Goal and Recommendations: Addressing Homelessness: The Best Practices of Seven Peer Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Course Goal and Recommendations: Policy Priorities for Addressing Homelessness in Apache Junction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART 2

**GO IN-DEPTH: SOCIO-ECONOMIC PLANNING**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Addressing Homelessness: The Best Practices of Seven Peer Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Areas for Further Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART 3

**GO IN-DEPTH: PUBLIC AFFAIRS CAPSTONE**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Policy Priorities for Addressing Homelessness in Apache Junction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Areas for Further Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART 4

**APPENDIX: STUDENT REPORTS & PRESENTATIONS**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-1</td>
<td>Socio-Economic Planning Student Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1</td>
<td>Socio-Economic Planning Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1</td>
<td>Public Affairs Student Report: Evans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-1</td>
<td>Public Affairs Student Report: Mettler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-1</td>
<td>Public Affairs Student Report: Serviss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-1</td>
<td>Public Affairs Student Report: Andrews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-1</td>
<td>Public Affairs Presentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

City of Apache Junction
Jeff Serdy, Mayor
Chip Wilson, Vice-Mayor
Gail Evans, City Councilmember
Robin Barker, City Councilmember
Dave Waldron, City Councilmember
Christa Rizzi, City Councilmember
Jeff Struble, City Councilmember
Bryant Powell, City Manager
Larry Kirch, Development Services Director
Janine Hanna-Solley, Economic Development Director
Heather Patel, Grants Administrator

Arizona State University (ASU)
Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability
Gary Dirks, Director
Rob Melnick, Executive Director
Christopher Boone, Dean of School of Sustainability
Meredith Simpson, Chief of Staff

On behalf of the ASU Wrigley Institute and the School of Sustainability, we extend a heartfelt thank you to the City of Apache Junction for enthusiastically engaging with students and faculty to confront difficult problems facing the community. Your real-world projects provide students with hands-on opportunities to apply knowledge that can create positive changes to Apache Junction’s future livelihood and community well-being.
February 20, 2018

Dear Apache Junction residents and community members,

On behalf of the City Council and the City of Apache Junction we wanted to let you know about our experience as the inaugural partner city for ASU’s Project Cities program. We are extremely grateful for the opportunity to work on four projects with over 140 students, and eight university professors, in six courses. Each of the projects provided Apache Junction citizens with opportunities for involvement in community improvements.

As a smaller community, Apache Junction doesn’t always have the resources to undertake every project that needs to be done. With a small investment in the Project Cities program, we can now work toward completing a few backlogged projects that have been identified in our city work programs and plans. The four projects that were undertaken in the Fall semester of 2017 (Positively AJ, Off-leash Dog Park, Sustainability and Solid Waste, and Understanding Homelessness), have been identified over a number of years as important issues in the Apache Junction Community. By engaging with ASU on the four projects, the city has been able to advance each project more quickly than we otherwise would have been able to do with city employees alone.

The research and recommendations for each project gave the city objective insights into some of our ongoing challenges as a city and how we can better serve our residents and visitors. The city is already using the report’s findings and recommendations to take next logical steps in moving the projects forward. We look forward to working with ASU and the Project Cities program on future projects!

With gratitude,

Jeff Serdy, Mayor

Bryant Powell, City Manager

Home of the Superstition Mountains
ABOUT PROJECT CITIES
Arizona State University’s (ASU) Project Cities program is a university-community partnership. For an entire academic year, faculty and students work with a single city to co-create strategies for better environmental, economic, and social balance in the places we live. Students from multiple disciplines research difficult problems chosen by the city and propose innovative sustainability solutions that will help it achieve a better future. Project Cities is a member of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network (EPIC-N), a growing network of more than 30 educational institutions partnering with cities throughout the United States and the world.

ABOUT SUSTAINABLE CITIES
Project Cities is a program of ASU’s Sustainable Cities Network. This network was founded in 2008 to support communities in sharing knowledge and coordinating efforts to understand and solve sustainability problems. It is designed to foster partnerships, identify best practices, provide training and information, and connect ASU’s research to the front-line challenges facing local communities. Network members come from Arizona cities, towns, counties, and Native American communities, and cover a broad range of professional disciplines. Together, these members work to create a more sustainable region and state. In 2012, the network was awarded the Pacific Southwest Region’s 2012 Green Government Award by the U.S. EPA for its efforts. For more information, visit sustainablecities.asu.edu.

Project Cities Team

**Director**
Anne Reichman  
anne.reichman@asu.edu  
480-965-2168

**Program Manager and Partner Liaison**
Paul Prosser  
paul.prosser@asu.edu  
480-965-5040

**Report Writing Assistant**
Anna Harmon, Masters of Sustainability Solutions Student

**Student Assistant**
Erin Rugland, B.A. Justice Studies and B.S. Public Policy Student

---

Sustainability Through Local Action  
projectcities.asu.edu
ABOUT APACHE JUNCTION

The City of Apache Junction is well-situated on the eastern edge of Greater Phoenix, the twelfth largest metropolis in the United States, yet it has a small-town, Western feel. This is both intentional and influenced by geography. Apache Junction sits at the base of the Superstition Mountains and Goldfield Mountains and is near attractions such as the Lost Dutchman State Park, Goldfield Ghost Town, Superstition Mountain Museum, Canyon Lake, Tortilla Flat, and the historic Apache Trail. Home to 39,000 residents, the city has a population that nearly doubles in the winter, when seasonal residents arrive to enjoy its pleasant weather and unique setting.

It was named Apache Junction because it is located at the intersection of US Route 60 and the historic Apache Trail, which was used by Native Americans and later stagecoaches to traverse the Superstition Mountains and for the construction of water-reclamation dams along the Salt River. The city also straddles Maricopa County and Pinal County. Incorporated in 1978, Apache Junction has arrived at another crossroads as it matures. While the city wants to retain its small-town character, it must prepare for an increasing population, and it has set out to develop greater economic opportunities. In the spring of 2005, Apache Junction debuted the first LEED-certified city hall in Arizona. It is Apache Junction’s aspirations and potential for sustainability, and the unique challenges it is facing, that form the basis of its partnership with Arizona State University’s Project Cities.

Apache Junction Team

Project Cities Project Director
Larry Kirch, Development Services Director

Project Cities Project Managers
Liz Langenbach, Director of Parks & Recreation
Matthew McNulty, Production/Marketing & Communications Specialist
Heather Patel, Grants Administrator

Surrounded by Legends
ajcity.net
Map of the City of Apache Junction and Greater Phoenix, Arizona
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, there has been a perceived increase of homelessness in Apache Junction. The 2017 Point in Time (PIT) count tallied 43 sheltered or unsheltered homeless individuals in the city on a single night in January. Apache Junction’s services for such individuals are limited and divided by county lines that bisect the city. Further, when the Genesis Project—a nonprofit that provides free food—moved to Apache Junction’s downtown, some nearby businesses were worried the presence of homeless people would deter customers.

The Apache Junction Empowerment Group was formed in 2015 and the Chronic Homeless Subcommittee in 2016 to work toward addressing and preventing homelessness in Apache Junction. Despite the contributions of these two groups, the city is still grasping to understand how the public perceives homelessness and what services are needed by its homeless population and those at risk of homelessness. In fall 2017, PUP 571 Socio-economic Planning and PAF 509 Public Affairs Capstone enlisted in Arizona State University’s Project Cities program to help Apache Junction comprehend these issues and make decisions about what to do next. The students in PUP 571 looked outward for insight, researching peer communities around the United States with similarities to Apache Junction and interviewing their leadership about successful strategies for addressing homelessness. (See Table 1 and Table 2 for their resulting recommendations.) PAF 509 students focused on Apache Junction, interviewing residents and analyzing data related to their specific topics, then presenting recommendations specific to the city’s context (See Table 3 and Table 4).

PUP 571: Students in this course looked to peer communities around the country for best practices for addressing homelessness. To choose the communities, they searched for those with characteristics like climate, population, and unemployment rate that were similar to those of Apache Junction, as well as communities making promising strides, which they
then vetted with Apache Junction staff to determine which seemed most promising. From interviews with leadership in the selected peer communities, their findings indicated that successful strategies make use of federal programs and funding, encourage collaboration and data sharing, involve the community, locate services prudently, and educate law enforcement.

**PAF 509:** Individual students in this course each produced a capstone report for their master’s degrees focused on specific aspects of homelessness in Apache Junction and related topics, such as funding opportunities or health concerns. Each chose customized investigative approaches including surveying residents and analyzing data. Based on their research methods, the students generated their own findings and recommendations. Themes that emerged for recommendations included: 1) providing shelter; 2) prioritizing transportation; 3) encouraging collaboration between service providers, the city, and neighboring municipalities; and 4) increasing public awareness.

The ideas and recommendations presented by these students are starting points for Apache Junction. They are meant to support the city in making improvements through plans informed by research, demographics, and opportunities. The work is not comprehensive or totally cohesive, and any pursuit of the recommendations requires professional review and consideration. That being said, the course reports are meant to stimulate deeper conversations among managers and policy makers as well as staff, residents, and community groups.

Following this executive summary, and the goals and recommendations of each report, are introductory summaries of the final reports generated by each course. These cover the problem targeted, research methods used, findings, resulting recommendations, and areas for further exploration. Each summary is followed by select student deliverables in their entireties, which can be consulted for greater depth and more clarity on how the recommendations were reached.
Goal

The goal of this course was to support Apache Junction in collecting promising strategies for helping its homeless and mitigating negative impacts on its larger community. Student work was framed to help the city generate implementation strategies and ways to maximize services by researching and presenting successful practices of comparable communities around the United States.

Apache Junction has established a committee and working group to determine services for the city’s homeless population, which residents and business owners perceive to be growing. Despite these efforts, the city is still struggling to identify what strategies will reduce homelessness and counter negative impacts, real or perceived, on the community.

HOMELESS ENCAMPMENTS IN APACHE JUNCTION

Photos of homeless encampments in Apache Junction taken by city staff in 2016.
Recommendations for Employing a People-Centered Approach & Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use a People-Centered and Community-Based Approach</th>
<th>Collect and Employ Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tailor services and allocate resources based on the unique, case-by-case needs of homeless individuals and families. There are rarely one-size-fits-all approaches to homelessness.</td>
<td>Add questions to the Point-in-Time count that service providers and the community want answered. Use data collection to get to the heart of the problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support customized approaches, create and sustain a strong network of volunteer organizations that share data and collaborate.</td>
<td>Use data to dispel many of the myths surrounding homelessness. Concrete evidence demonstrating where the homeless population is from, how much money they make on the streets, and how they became homeless may help alleviate stigma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a community involvement strategy that best fits the needs of Apache Junction’s homeless population and capitalizes on services already being provided. For example, consider involving citizens in selecting locations of high-volume services if it seems like this would be mutually beneficial and increase community buy-in.</td>
<td>Share data and information between service providers. Coordinated data entry and sharing are most effective in meeting the needs of homeless individuals and families, as their specific circumstances and histories are used to determine the urgency and type of services provided from a broad pool of options.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Student recommendations regarding using a people-centered and community-based approach and collecting and employing data to do so.
# Recommendations for Making Use of Existing Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Take Advantage of Existing Resources</th>
<th>Train Law Enforcement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make use of available sources of funding and programming. These include various county, state, and federal programs such as Continuum of Care (CoC), the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and Housing First.</td>
<td>Engage police officers in connecting individuals who are at risk of homelessness, and those who already are homeless, with expedited essential support services that best fit their needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach out to organizations such as the United Way, the Salvation Army, and Goodwill for help providing services and knowledge about how to address homelessness.</td>
<td>Train police officers how to interact with homeless people who have mental illnesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask the Maricopa Association of Governments to put together a fair of homeless services provided in the surrounding area to facilitate conversation and discuss best practices within the region for combating homelessness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help those in need get access to other federal services such as Nutrition Assistance, Medicaid, Disability Compensation for veterans, or Supplemental Security Income for those with disabilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with local agencies, places of worship, and volunteer organizations to coordinate services and establish a shared network of volunteers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Student recommendations regarding taking advantage of resources already available to Apache Junction, including law enforcement.*
The goal of this course was to help Apache Junction understand how its citizens perceive homelessness and what homeless services make sense in Apache Junction. The city wanted to see elements of a cohesive approach to homelessness in the city, including legal and policy remedies.

Apache Junction is not equipped to deal with homelessness. It has no housing options or shelters. Further, some service organizations do not cross the county lines that divide the city. Most of the related services Apache Junction lists on its website are hotlines or county and state services, which means they are not within reach of homeless individuals. While the Genesis Project, a nonprofit that provides free food, has relocated downtown, it is unclear if this move exacerbated the problem or is part of a solution. In response to the array of concerns, the Empowerment Group and the Chronic Homeless Subcommittee were formed to explore services and strategies. However, to move forward, the city needs a better grasp on the problem context and scope, as well as the most applicable strategies for addressing homelessness.
### Recommendations for Policy Priorities to Address Homelessness Related to Resources & Policy Creation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provide Shelter</th>
<th>Prioritize Transportation</th>
<th>Be Strategic About Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create transitional housing options. Consider recruiting nonprofits like United Methodist Outreach Ministries (UMOM) or the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) to assist with this endeavor.</td>
<td>Host bicycle donation or repair drives to help provide access to transportation. These drives could be hosted by community members, a local business like Junction Bicycles, or through a mechanic trade school.</td>
<td>Account for the seasonality of visible homelessness in Apache Junction when developing policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that new low-income housing developments are either within walking distance of employment opportunities and support services or close to transportation to them.</td>
<td>The city or the Genesis Project could reach out to private organizations and ask for donations to purchase bikes. Companies like the Target Corporation offer gift card donations to 501(c)3 organizations. Bikes could be loaned to individuals until they reach self-sufficiency.</td>
<td>Recognize that while drug addiction is not the cause of all homelessness, it is an issue that should be taken into consideration when designing policy regarding homelessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage landlords to participate in the housing choice voucher program.</td>
<td>Work with the Valley Metro bus system to coordinate reduced fare options for homeless individuals.*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide incentives for seasonal residents to rent out their units to provide temporary affordable housing while they are away.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer homeless individuals transportation to the nearest shelters in other cities if Apache Junction is unable to offer shelter. (However this may be poorly perceived if this service is coordinated without the permission of the cities.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Student recommendations related to providing shelter, prioritizing transportation, and being strategic about policy.

*While one student recommended this, city staff see it as less feasible since the closest bus stop is 8 miles away and extending a route to the city is not planned in the near future.*
**Recommendations for Policy Priorities to Address Homelessness Related to Collaboration & Community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Build Public Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fund a team of social workers or nonprofit counselors who follow through with homeless individuals to ensure they are receiving services and help them toward stability.</td>
<td>Use the Chronic Homeless Subcommittee to educate the downtown business community about services currently available for the homeless as well as any policy implementations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate efforts at an intermediary level with funders to identify different collaborations in which to participate. Such coordination by local governments can help prepare them to make the case to the community for increasing resources for the homeless.</td>
<td>Appoint a residents’ subcommittee on homelessness to the Chronic Homeless Subcommittee to advise about community attitudes regarding the homeless population, as citizen buy-in is important to justifying additional budgetary emphasis on homelessness services.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with administrators of homelessness service providers to establish formal coordination behaviors.</td>
<td>Create a marketing internship for educating the public about homelessness in their city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allot funding to ensure that city personnel are connecting with the community, attending trainings, and participating in regional meetings.</td>
<td>With any public awareness campaign about homelessness in Apache Junction, aim to humanize homeless or at-risk individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritize employment programs and case management services.</td>
<td>Invite city officials and business owners to participate in the Homeless Challenge, for which they would spend 48 hours on the streets to better understand what homeless people experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not criminalize the homeless for things like sleeping in parks. Rather offer opportunities to receive services or see program counselors.</td>
<td>Invite students at local schools to submit videos that portray relatable characteristics about homeless people in Apache Junction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach out to neighboring cities like Mesa to request police assistance in high-crime areas within a certain mileage of their city limits.</td>
<td>Challenge students to come up with other public awareness tactics. This would get them thinking critically about homelessness, learning about resources, and possibly identifying new solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit nonprofits to the city that are geared toward assisting the homeless. This would visibly demonstrate that the city is striving for solutions, and provide volunteer opportunities for citizens to get involved and be educated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*While this was the recommendation of one student, in review, city staff thinks a better approach to receive community input might be developing better opportunities for citizen engagement and feedback with the existing Chronic Homelessness subcommittee such as a public town hall.*
This page was intentionally left blank.
Addressing Homelessness: The Best Practices of Seven Peer Communities
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Faculty
Deirdre Pfeiffer

Students & Co-Authors
Caleb Carpenter
Maggie Dellow
Wenqi Ding
Beth Dukes
Catyana Falsetti
John Field
Heidi Hanlon
Kelly Hyde
Anissa Keane
Brittany Kimura
Monika Miynarska
Brian Rojas
Kellie Rorex
Elizabeth Van Horn
INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is not an issue that is unique to Apache Junction. Indeed, cities around the United States are looking for ways to address this problem that leaves people without basic necessities and frustrates communities. In the last several years, Apache Junction has created a working group and committee to look for ways to address and prevent homelessness in the city. To support Apache Junction in collecting promising strategies, students in the fall 2017 course PUP 571 Socio-Economic Planning at ASU researched successful practices of seven comparable communities around the United States. This report describes their methods and findings.

First, students researched municipalities with similar qualities to Apache Junction that were making strong efforts to reduce homelessness and worked with Apache Junction officials to select from them the most relevant peer communities. Next, with the guidance of Professor Deirdre Pfeiffer, pairs of students interviewed leadership from seven selected peer communities to get insight into contexts and successful strategies.

Findings from this research included that successful peer cities made use of federal grants and coordinated efforts between all organizations involved, government and non-government. The students in PUP 571 then came together to create a comprehensive report for Apache Junction highlighting the most promising practices of the seven peer communities. Recommendations included tailoring services to the needs of each homeless individual or family, collecting data to dispel myths about homelessness, coordinating support services for the homeless, and training law enforcement on how to interact with and assist homeless individuals.

Through their research, students identified common characteristics of measures that help the homeless and mitigate negative impacts of homelessness on the community. The remainder of this Socio-Economic Planning section explains the comprehensive methods students employed to identify peer communities and their successes. It then details the findings and related recommendations. This “Addressing Homelessness: The Best Practices of Seven Peer Communities” section concludes with areas for further exploration and a concise conclusion, followed by the students’ synthesis report in its entirety.
PROBLEM

Apache Junction has established a committee and working group to provide services for the city’s homeless population, which residents and business owners perceive to be growing. Despite these efforts, the city is still struggling to identify what strategies will reduce homelessness while also countering negative impacts and perceptions on the community.

METHODS

Students enrolled in PUP 571 used two research methods to identify best practices for consideration by Apache Junction. First, they analyzed data and reports to pinpoint Apache Junction’s peer communities. Next they interviewed a small number of stakeholders in each peer community to gather more detailed information about successful strategies. The following paragraphs explain the methods employed and how they were used to generate insightful results.

Content analysis: For this method, researchers gathered documents with a certain focus and analyzed the data they found to draw helpful conclusions. In this case, data analysis was performed by collecting city data from the U.S. Census database and climate-related data sources and then normalizing, ranking, and indexing the results to find communities with comparable demographics, socioeconomic traits, and geography to Apache Junction. Characteristics considered included population, seasonal vacant housing units, car dependency, climate, unemployment rate, median income, and recent activity related to homelessness. Next, the students analyzed recent homeless advocacy reports and media related to homelessness to find peer communities that were making innovative and promising efforts to address homelessness, which meant they had potential to reveal best practices that would work in Apache Junction. For example, the success of Housing First in Nevada is well known. The resulting list of cities was presented to Apache Junction officials to select the most relevant peer communities. (See Table 1 for final peer communities and some selection characteristics.)

It was important that peer communities be similar to Apache Junction because if they weren’t, even their most successful efforts might fail in Apache Junction.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>Climate</th>
<th>Percent of Workers Who Commuted Alone</th>
<th>Total Housing Units</th>
<th>Percent of Housing that Is Mobile Homes</th>
<th>Total Vacant Units</th>
<th>% Vacant Units for Seasonal, Recreational, or Occasional Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harlingen, TX</td>
<td>65,801</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>34,466</td>
<td>Humid mild temperate</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>25,585</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3,692</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenosha, WI</td>
<td>99,218</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>49,160</td>
<td>Humid cold with hot summer</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>40,660</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3,553</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunrise Manor, NV</td>
<td>191,464</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>39,586</td>
<td>Cold desert</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>70,465</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10,099</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Centro, CA</td>
<td>43,570</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>33,161</td>
<td>Hot desert</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>14,255</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1,814</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marana, AZ</td>
<td>38,280</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>74,438</td>
<td>Hot semi-arid</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>14,750</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome, GA</td>
<td>44,548</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>34,874</td>
<td>Humid mild temperate</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>16,160</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2,372</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Valley, UT</td>
<td>133,660</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>52,534</td>
<td>Humid mild temperate</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>38,147</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1,934</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apache Junction</td>
<td>36,586</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>35,671</td>
<td>Hot desert</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>21,766</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>5,833</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The final peer communities selected by students and Apache Junction staff and some characteristics used to determine them. (See student report page 1-4 for entire table of characteristics.) Sources included the American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau, which was held in 2010.
Interview: Interviewing is a human-centered research method that is used to collect mostly qualitative data. In this case, students developed 14 interview questions with several follow-up prompts to ask the key stakeholders from the peer communities, including government officials, service providers, nonprofit leadership, law enforcement, and Veteran Affairs staff (See Figure 1 for examples). The questions, which were organized into four parts—Characteristics of the Homeless, Helping the Homeless, Community Impacts, and Wrap Up—were designed to extract information about the homeless population in each peer community and strategies being used to reduce homelessness. Before interviewing stakeholders, students tested the questions by interviewing each other to ensure questions were clear, neutral, and would generate the most useful information. Interviews with stakeholders were conducted over the phone or via email.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH PEER COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

- How would you describe the characteristics of homeless people in your community?
  Prompt: Do you have any insights into how people become homeless in your community?
- Are there places where homeless people congregate in your community? If so, can you tell me about these places?
- What kind of help is available to homeless people in your community?
- Does your community team up with other jurisdictions to help the homeless? If so, how does this work?
- Do you have any advice for the City of Apache Junction about developing strategies to help the homeless?
- What would you say are the main effects of homelessness on your community?
- Are there any efforts that help deal with the negative effects of homelessness on your community? If so, can you tell me about them?
- Do you have any advice for the City of Apache Junction about developing strategies to deal with the community effects of homelessness?

Figure 1. A selection of the 14 questions of the four-part (Characteristics of the Homeless, Helping the Homeless, Community Impacts, Wrap Up) interview tool developed by students that they asked leadership of peer communities. (See page 1-14 for entire tool.)
FINDINGS

Through their key stakeholder interviews, students learned about strategies used to help homeless populations and mitigate negative effects in the selected peer communities. These communities include: El Centro, California; Sunrise Manor, Nevada; Marana, Arizona; West Valley, Utah; Harlingen, Texas; Kenosha, Wisconsin; and Rome, Georgia. Successful strategies in those communities included making use of federal programs and funding, collaborating and sharing data, involving the community, prudently locating services, and educating law enforcement. (See Table 2.)

Federal Programs and Funding

Students found that six of the seven communities have used federal funds and programming to provide housing or coordinate services. For instance, West Valley, Utah’s homeless population has decreased from 2,000 to less than 200 since it launched Housing First in 2007. Designed by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, Housing First prioritizes moving homeless people into housing and then providing additional supports and services, rather than the other way around. The overarching idea is that individuals have better access to what they need to become stable if they are in housing. Clients are merely required to pay between 30% of their income or up to $50 a month for housing, whichever amount is greater.

STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY PEER COMMUNITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helping the Homeless</th>
<th>Reducing Community Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making use of federal funding and programming</td>
<td>Being strategic when selecting locations of services and including citizens in decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling data sharing and collaboration between involved organizations</td>
<td>Gathering data on the homeless population that can help dispel myths and negative perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging community involvement</td>
<td>Educating the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Involving law enforcement in providing homeless individuals and families with support services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Strategies highlighted by the students that peer communities used to help the homeless and reduce community impacts. (See student report page 1-4 for how they presented these.)*
According to the students, Harlingen, Texas’s use of the Rapid Rehousing project of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Continuum of Care (CoC) program is another successful example. The program was created to provide housing relocation and stabilization services for homeless families or individuals. **Since launching Rapid Rehousing in 2013, Harlingen has had a 60% decline in its homeless population.** CoC provides funding to nonprofits, states, and local governments for such services, contingent on data being gathered on clients and services through HUD’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). HMIS can also be used for data sharing across organizations.

---

**Collaboration and Data Sharing**

Students found that data sharing and collaboration are important strategies used by peer communities. Many cities have food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, Veteran Affairs clinics and other critical organizations that support the day-to-day needs of the homeless population and their transition to long-term independence. (In Apache Junction, this includes the Genesis Project, The Apache Junction Veterans Center, United Way of Pinal County, and the city’s Community Resource Center.) However, such organizations rarely coordinate their efforts and few have the capacity to share client data that might help customize services for individuals. HMIS’s Coordinated Entry System is one way to address this. When someone is referred to this system, through a contact or physical location, they can be matched with agencies or programs in the city that best meet their needs. Such collaboration and data sharing shifts homeless services from less-efficient program-centered models to client-centered models. Together, service providers are able to use an integrated network to understand the history of clients, work together to align services, and get greater outcomes.

---

**Community Involvement and Education**

In the peer community of Rome, Georgia, the community came together to provide a sympathetic and supportive environment for the homeless population. Local businesses offered access to bathrooms and meals, technical colleges provided a job training program, and citizens fully funded a homeless shelter and a college scholarship for a homeless
high school valedictorian. In the peer community of Kenosha, Wisconsin, the nonprofit Kenosha Human and Development Services recruits new landlords through its programs, landlord forums, and apartment searches for clients to collaborate with Housing First programs. This nonprofit also brought together 28 community organizations through its Homeless Awareness Prevention Partnership.

These efforts highlight how important community involvement is to providing coordinated services. But they also reflect how community involvement can help dispel myths about or negative feelings toward the homeless population. Students found that six of the seven peer communities used public participation, engagement, and education to mitigate community impacts (see page 1-4 of the Socio-Economic Planning report for details). A similar approach is to give community members opportunities to speak about their concerns at forums and public meetings, allowing them to take ownership of problems and potential solutions. This is helpful because public engagement allows citizens to learn about what is being done from homeless service professionals and government officials doing the work in the community. Further, peer communities use educational opportunities to reduce negative perceptions and impacts. One example is the Kenosha nonprofit Walkin’ in My Shoes, which educates the public about homelessness while providing meals to the homeless.

Data gathering bolsters community involvement and education. According to the students, collecting data requires the efforts of volunteers and community organizations and gives citizens insight into the realities of the homeless population, which can change perceptions and strengthen services. For example, the annual Point-in-Time count survey required of any community receiving federal HUD grants relies on volunteer data gathering. Questions can be added to this survey to paint a picture of who the homeless population really is and what it needs. The Human and Development Services department of Kenosha, Washington also used this count to hand out care packages.

Location of Services

Students found that collaborative decision-making can be helpful when locating highly frequented homeless services. For instance, the peer community of West Valley, Utah invited its citizens to help determine the location of a new shelter. This is because such services can generate
concerns and complaints from residents and may discourage customers from visiting nearby businesses. In contrast, collaborating with community members to locate high-frequency services can reduce perceived negative impacts and increase citizen buy-in while ensuring important services are available to those in need. According to several interviewed stakeholders and public opinion data, if possible, highly frequented locations should be placed away from downtowns, but should be easily accessible by public transit, foot, and bike. However, communication with community members and business owners may allow for mutually beneficial compromises.

Role of Law Enforcement

According to the students’ research, police officers are critical to ensuring individuals and families receive services and support. They often respond first to situations that lead to, or are a part of, homelessness, including domestic abuse and drug use. Police officers regularly interact with homeless populations and are often the most accessible sources for finding services ranging from health clinics to Alcoholics Anonymous. Accordingly, they need to be educated about where to direct individuals for services, and how to determine what resources they need. The students found several examples of peer communities working with law enforcement to improve access to homeless services. For example, in the peer community of West Valley, Utah, the Lethality Assessment Program helps first responders and victim advocates expedite essential services for those in need. And in Cameron County, Texas, a bike patrol police unit connects homeless individuals with mental health issues to local service programs that meet their needs. Police officers also need to know how to avoid escalating situations when interacting with homeless members of society. In Rome, Georgia police officers are trained by the National Alliance on Mental Illness how to interact with homeless individuals with mental illnesses and open lines of communication.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on their findings, the students compiled recommendations for Apache Junction. They separated these into four categories, including using a people-centered approach, taking advantage of existing resources, collecting data, and training police officers about how to interact with and help homeless individuals with mental issues.

Use a People-Centered and Community-Based Approach

1. Tailor services and allocate resources based on the unique, case-by-case needs of homeless individuals and families. There are rarely one-size-fits-all approaches to homelessness.
2. To support customized approaches, create and sustain a strong network of volunteer organizations that share data and collaborate.
3. Develop a community involvement strategy that best fits the needs of Apache Junction’s homeless population and capitalizes on services already being provided. For example, consider involving citizens in selecting locations of high-volume services if it seems like this would be mutually beneficial and increase community buy-in.

Take Advantage of Existing Resources

1. Make use of available sources of funding and programming. These include various county, state, and federal programs such as Continuum of Care (CoC), the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and Housing First.
2. Reach out to organizations such as the United Way, the Salvation Army, and Goodwill for help providing services and knowledge about how to address homelessness.
3. Ask the Maricopa Association of Governments to put together a fair of homeless services provided in the surrounding area to facilitate conversation and discuss best practices within the region for combating homelessness.
4. Help those in need get access to other federal services such as Nutrition Assistance, Medicaid, Disability Compensation for veterans, or Supplemental Security Income for those with disabilities.
5. Work with local agencies, places of worship, and volunteer organizations to coordinate services and establish a shared network of volunteers.
Collect and Employ Data

1. Add questions to the Point-in-Time count that service providers and the community want answered. Use data collection to get to the heart of the problem.
2. Use data to dispel many of the myths surrounding homelessness. Concrete evidence demonstrating where the homeless population is from, how much money they make on the streets, and how they became homeless may help to alleviate stigma.
3. Share data and information between service providers. Coordinated data entry and sharing are most effective in meeting the needs of homeless individuals and families, as their specific circumstances and histories are used to determine the urgency and type of services provided from a broad pool of options. This recommendation is directly related to pursuing a people-centered approach to addressing homelessness.

Train Law Enforcement

1. Engage police officers in connecting individuals who are at risk of homelessness and those who already are homeless with expedited essential support services that best fit their needs. Police officers are often present in pivotal moments that lead to or are part of homelessness, including domestic abuse and drug use.
2. Train police officers how to interact with homeless people who have mental illnesses.

AREAS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

It is important to involve the community, but Apache Junction needs to first determine what role, if any, local residents, business owners, and community leaders could and should play in addressing homelessness. Just like there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to homelessness, there is not a single best practice for community involvement.
CONCLUSION

With this report, Apache Junction wanted best practices to consider for reducing homelessness that also take community concerns into consideration. To help the city in that endeavor, the students of the fall 2017 PUP 571 course with Professor Pfeiffer researched the best practices of seven peer communities. Based on their findings, they identified the importance of providing customized support for individuals through collaboration and data sharing, making use of resources like federal programs, and training law enforcement. The students also recommended Apache Junction address community concerns by emphasizing data collection to dispel negative perceptions, encouraging educational opportunities, and inviting citizens to get involved. The recommendations lend themselves to strategies the city can develop to better help their homeless population while minimizing effects on the community. As Apache Junction decides what solutions to pursue, it can look to these best practices of seven peer communities for guidance.
This page intentionally left blank.
Policy Priorities for Addressing Homelessness in Apache Junction
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Faculty
Malcolm Goggin

Teaching Assistant
Alison Richardson

Students
Jason R. Andrews
Justine Evans
Leigh Jensen
Lindsey LaRocca
Alison Mettler
Terranique Nuness
Joan Serviss
Jason Thompson
INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is a multifaceted problem, and there are no one-dimensional responses. This is very clear to Apache Junction officials, who are trying to understand the many facets of its homeless population and citizen perceptions of the issue in the city. The students of fall 2017 course PAF 509: Public Affairs Capstone at ASU set out to support Apache Junction by gathering concrete information about homelessness in Arizona, the needs of homeless and at-risk individuals, the perceptions of homelessness in the city, and funding options available for future steps the city may take.

Eight students in the course worked independently, determining their approaches to the topic for their master’s degree capstone projects in which they presented their findings and recommendations. All students began their research by reviewing literature to gather data on Apache Junction, homelessness, and efforts to reduce homelessness across the United States. Then the students selected methods of research to gain further insight, including analyzing data and surveying and interviewing Apache Junction stakeholders. Using such methods, students identified the most important homelessness issues and developed solutions for the city to consider including what services and funding options work best, and how to manage public perceptions.

Through this project, Apache Junction wanted to better understand how its citizens perceived homelessness, what homeless services are required in Apache Junction, and how to align support services. Accordingly, each student generated recommendations relating to their findings, including: 1) prioritizing access to housing 2) collaborating with organizations, residents, and other cities, and 3) generating public awareness. Importantly, it is up to Apache Junction to identify which recommendations align best with its priorities, and how to integrate these into a cohesive strategy.

The remainder of this “Policy Priorities for Addressing Homelessness in Apache Junction” section explains the methods used by the students, as well as their findings. It then delves into the most enlightening recommendations. The report wraps up with areas for further exploration and a concise conclusion, followed by select student reports in their entireties.
PROBLEM

Apache Junction is not equipped to deal with homelessness. It has no housing options or shelters. Further, some service organizations do not cross the county lines that divide the city, and most of the related services it lists on its website are only available outside city limits. While the Genesis Project, a nonprofit that provides free food, has relocated downtown, it is unclear to the city or businesses if the move exacerbated the problem or is part of a solution. The city’s lack of clarity on public perceptions of homelessness has resulted in a lack of action, positive or negative. In response to the array of concerns, the Empowerment Group and the Chronic Homeless Subcommittee were formed to explore services and strategies. However, to move forward, the city needs a better grasp on the problem context and scope, as well as the best strategies to cope with it.

METHODS

The students used literature review as their initial research method to better understand what causes homelessness and how it has been met by other cities. Under the guidance of Professor Goggin, some students then proceeded to gather more information from stakeholders, while others analyzed data to determine patterns and new insights. The methods they employed were stakeholder interviews, stakeholder surveys, and content analysis. The methods are explained in the following paragraphs.

Literature review: This method requires compiling and reviewing information and data on, or related to, a specific subject. In this case, literature does not mean novels or plays, but rather the broad scope of written work on a specific topic. For this report, the students reviewed academic papers; class lectures; online posts; case studies; and materials produced by city, county, state, and federal governments. Literature review can be a general or structured research method. Some students used a structured analytical method to extract information for their findings and recommendations. This is detailed below.

Content analysis: Researchers use this method to analyze data for patterns, themes, or fresh information. One student applied this method to data on nearby cities including the size of their homeless populations and their related programs. Another employed content analysis to create
a comprehensive set of available financial resources for homelessness and housing services in Arizona, focusing on the lower two tiers of Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Need, rest and shelter (Serviss report, page 5-7). (Therefore resources like help with education and employment were not included.) Then she further analyzed the content to determine which of these resources apply to Apache Junction. Sources of these funds included but were not limited to the Arizona Department of Economic Security’s Coordinated Homeless Services, Arizona Department of Housing’s National Housing Trust Fund, and the U.S. Housing and Urban Development’s Continuum of Care Program. (See Figure 1 for all the sources the student analyzed.)

**FUNDING SOURCES ANALYZED BY ONE STUDENT**

- Arizona Department of Economic Security’s Coordinated Homeless Services
- Arizona Department of Economic Security’s Domestic Violence Prevention Program
- Arizona Department of Housing’s Community Development Block Grants
- Arizona Department of Housing’s Community Development Block Grants-State Special Projects
- Arizona Department of Health Services’ Cooperative Agreements to Benefit Homeless Individuals
- Arizona Department of Health Services’ Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness
- Arizona Department of Housing’s HOME Investment Partnership Program
- Arizona Department of Housing’s Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS
- Arizona Department of Housing’s National Housing Trust Fund
- City of Apache Junction’s Allocation of Non-Entitlement Funds
- HUD’s Continuum of Care Program

*Figure 1. Sources of funding one student looked at to create a unique data set for Apache Junction (Serviss, 5-13).*
Interviews and Surveys: These research methods involve speaking with or sending surveys to participants to explore perspectives on a particular topic. (The difference between the two is that interviews are conducted by the researcher with the participant, while surveys require participants to fill out surveys.) For this report, two students interviewed or surveyed stakeholders in Apache Junction, primarily downtown business owners. They provided open-ended questions rather than multiple choice options, as they were gathering qualitative information such as opinions, rather than data. One student did semi-structured interviews over the phone and via the online tool SurveyMonkey (Evans report, page 3-9). (See Figure 2 for her survey questions.) She received less than 10 responses. The other student identified his pool of businesses from the Apache Junction Chamber of Commerce’s listings and then randomly selected sixteen to contact. Four responded. His interviews were semi-formal, which means he asked specific questions about their businesses, such as size and number of years open, as well as open-ended questions about topics including perceptions of homelessness in the city and any impacts of homelessness on their businesses. One of the four interview participants responded that they were unaware of homelessness in the city, and so was not asked follow-up questions. Afterward, this student examined interview transcripts for common themes and key points (Andrews report, page 6-9).

FINDINGS

Using literature reviews, students were better able to understand the statistics and underlying causes of homelessness in Arizona. According to Arizona’s annual point-in-time street and shelter count, there were 9,682 men, women, and children who were experiencing homelessness in 2016. In Apache Junction, the homeless count for 2017 was 43. This number does not reflect those who are in and out of housing or living in temporary situations. An ASU Morrison Institute of Public Policy survey done in 2013 determined that nearly half of the homeless population in Arizona were women, children, or families and 23% are military veterans. This report lists the most reoccurring issues that cause homelessness in the state are: job loss, family violence or conflict, divorce, medical (non-mental) issues, mental health, disability, and substance abuse.
SURVEY CONducted BY ONE STUDENT TO GATHER PUBLIC VIEWS

Survey Title: Public Views on Apache Junction Homelessness
Survey Type: Semi-structured phone interviews
Participants: Stakeholders of Apache Junction area (i.e. business owners close to the soup kitchen and citizens of Apache Junction etc.)
Survey Questions:

- Would you be willing to answer some questions, so that I may better understand the public's view on homelessness in Apache Junction? The questions will take you about five minutes to complete. Your answers will be combined with other peoples' responses and I will not share your individual information.
- What do you know about the homeless population in Apache Junction?
- How would you describe homelessness in Apache Junction?
- What do you think are the primary reasons that some people are homeless in Apache Junction?
  - Economic factors, health related factors, family related factors, substance abuse, inadequate public transportation, housing availability, inadequate support service or other? If other, please explain.
- Have you, someone you know, or your workplace been impacted by homelessness in Apache Junction?

Figure 2. Interview questions asked by one student of Apache Junction stakeholders about homelessness (Evans, 3-23).

Of this population, 91% are interested in finding housing, but nearly 20% are on a waiting list or unable to qualify. (See Table 1 for more information.) Of all services available to homeless individuals in Arizona, those they use most are shelter, food assistance, health care services, and case management. (See Table 2 for more information.)
### PERCENT OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS IN ARIZONA INTERESTED IN HOUSING PLUS THEIR INCOME SOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest &amp; Individual Revenue Sources</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interested in Finding Housing</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Housing Waiting List</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has Income</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker Compensation</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran Disability</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran Pension</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Disability</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Stamps</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Sources of Income</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The percentage of homeless individuals in Arizona who want housing along with basic personal income situations (Mettler report, page 4-15).

### PERCENTAGE OF ARIZONA HOMELESS POPULATION THAT MADE USE OF SPECIFIC SERVICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Services</th>
<th>Percent of Homeless That Use Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Food Assistance</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shower Program</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water or Respite Station</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Program</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soup Kitchen or Dining Hall</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care Services</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Voicemail</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Management</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent Assistance</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility Assistance</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. The percentage of Arizona’s homeless population that made use of each type of social service (Mettler, 4-15).
When it comes to resources for people experiencing homelessness in Apache Junction, the city does have a few related programs and organizations, but the students noted that most of the programs and services listed on the city’s website are hotlines or county or statewide services. This means most services are not within reach of homeless individuals in the city. Further, there are no housing options or shelters for the homeless in Apache Junction.

According to one student, the city would benefit from employment programs and case management services. However, there can be resistance to providing such services if homelessness is perceived as a result of personal choices rather than of social issues that require community responses. This can lead to homeless people being marginalized as helpless or criminal, and as subordinate to citizens with homes. Such mentalities about “what to do with the homeless,” rather than “what to do about homelessness,” can be problematic (Andrews, 6-3). The first framework is reflected in policies such as anti-vagrancy laws (which have been historically ruled unconstitutional) and laws prohibiting sitting or congregating in certain areas. One-dimensional policies targeted at keeping certain individuals out of areas like downtowns are not viable long-term solutions. While “quality of life” ordinances are justified as ways of forcing homeless people to seek services, they also cause homeless individuals to distance themselves from repeated police contact and harassment. Further, criminalizing homelessness can worsen the problems of homeless individuals by giving them petty criminal records that impede them from getting jobs, housing, or certain services. On the government side, increased policing to enforce such ordinances can cause financial strains on city resources. One alternative posed by the city of Washington, D.C. in response to complaints from its business district was to open a drop-in center where homeless people could go when emergency shelters were closed. This helped prevent loitering. To help fund the center, district businesses paid a tax based on property size. By providing a service that had been previously unavailable the community was able to engage with homeless people in a positive way.
However, such responses are limited in scope when it comes to meeting all the needs of homeless people. In contrast, affordable housing options can prevent homelessness, while transitional housing, at-risk youth housing, single-person housing, family housing, and senior housing can provide paths to stability for homeless individuals. According to the U.S. Department of Economic Security, “housing is the foundational intervention that moves an individual or family from homelessness to self-sufficiency.” Providing the chronically homeless with a safe and sustainable place to live provides easier access to resources for solving other root issues. No form of shelter or housing dedicated to the homeless is available in Apache Junction. The city is not alone in its resource limitations. Queen Creek, Marana, and Oro Valley are all in similar straits. Mesa, Tempe, and Phoenix, the three larger nearby cities one student compared to Apache Junction, are pursuing more traditional housing, rent assistance, and short-term shelters (Mettler, 4-16). Though most major cities in the United States have transitional housing, 74.3% of this housing has minimum wait times of four months. Along with transitional housing, low-income and affordable housing also help reduce homelessness. However, according to the 2008 Pinal County Housing Needs Assessment, the housing mix available in Apache Junction results in an affordable housing shortage. Further, 60% of the city’s housing units are vacant seasonally.

That being said, housing is not a standalone solution to homelessness. This problem requires meeting a number of social needs. Solutions should include overcoming further barriers to independence, such as the inability to travel to basic services or work. According to a report one student cited, lack of reliable transportation hampers the ability of homeless individuals to gain stability. In its response, Apache Junction should consider ways to provide access to public transportation.

According to one student, in the 2016 fiscal year, Arizona had more than $136 million to dedicate to homelessness and housing support services. Of this, Apache Junction is utilizing only 0.9 percent (Serviss, 5-15). Today, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers nearly $2 billion in federal funds across the United States through regional and geographic Continuums of Care (CoC). There are three CoC in Arizona: the Maricopa CoC, which covers Maricopa County; the Tucson-Pima Collaboration to
End Homelessness CoC, which covers Pima County; and the Balance of State CoC, which covers the thirteen remaining counties in the state. Pinal County and Apache Junction are in the Balance of State CoC jurisdiction. The most promising funding opportunity from HUD (see Table 3) is its emergency solutions grants, which are disbursed to local governments with the requirement that they collaborate with their CoC to distribute funds to service providers. The grants can be used for homeless outreach, shelter operations, rapid rehousing, and homelessness prevention. On the state level, the Arizona Department of Economic Security’s Coordinated Homeless Services funding is distributed to homeless service providers and is fairly flexible (Serviss, 5-15).

One thing the student stressed is that all these funding sources require public comment, either through solicitation over a period of time or public hearings. By seeking public input, clearly communicating with citizens, and educating them, Apache Junction could find traction for solutions that address the complex social issue.

The interviews that students conducted with a limited number of Apache Junction citizens, primarily downtown business owners, revealed some citizen support for the city making efforts to help its homeless population. According to a student survey of four downtown business owners, respondents did report seeing more begging or panhandling near their businesses. However, the respondents did not think that the new location of the Genesis Project, a nonprofit that provides free food, was the cause of increased visibility of homelessness downtown or in the city. One respondent pointed out that the Genesis Project supports other residents in addition to the homeless (Andrews, 6-11). (Of the 100 to 120 meals it serves a day, on average about 70 to 90 of them go to people on fixed incomes or facing other temporary hardships.) Only one respondent knew of resources available to homeless people in Apache Junction other than the Genesis Project. Further, one respondent spoke of the lack of long-term or short-term shelter for the homeless in the city and said Apache Junction was hesitant to provide shelter services for fear of attracting more homeless individuals. The respondent also pointed out that even if they are homeless, these individuals see the city as home and might benefit from services close to where they live.
**THE MOST PROMISING FUNDING SOURCES FOR APACHE JUNCTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Housing and Urban Development</th>
<th>Arizona</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Solutions Grants: can be used for homeless outreach, shelter operations, rapid rehousing, homelessness prevention.</td>
<td>Department of Economic Security's Coordinated Homeless Services: program funding is mix of state taxes, federal funds, fines, and fees. Distributed to homeless service providers.</td>
<td>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA), Cooperative Agreement to Benefit Homeless Individuals (CABHI), and Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH): only available to nonprofit service providers who work with to people experiencing homelessness together with substance abuse and/or mental illness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Housing Trust Fund: can be used for new construction or rehabilitation of rental units to create housing for extremely low-income households.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), CBDG State Special Projects, HOME Investment Partnerships Program: focused on creating and preserving affordable housing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS: focus on housing assistance for individuals with HIV/AIDS.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3. The most promising funding sources for Apache Junction to address homelessness. (See full table of potential funding in the Serviss report, page 5-14.)*
None of student’s four respondents noted an increase of crime in the city resulting from homelessness. There was, however, a recurring opinion that drug addiction causes criminal behavior and that there is a relationship between addiction and homelessness. The student did find business owners perceived an uptick of homelessness in the city in the winter season. For the other survey conducted by a student, which received less than ten responses, all respondents believed there was a large homeless population in the city, and that summer heat and public stigma makes life difficult for them. However, those respondents only identified three causes for homelessness: economic factors, substance abuse, and family related factors. The surveying student pointed out that if Apache Junction citizens are unaware of the root issues of homelessness in the city, or are resistant to relevant solutions that they think might negatively affect them, it will be hard for solutions to gain traction. Public service announcements are one way to change attitudes, which may benefit the homeless. These announcements can be persuasive or informative, such as the “Street Sheet,” a 2017 flyer that the United Way of Pinal County distributed in Apache Junction with information about resources for those in need in the city. They can also communicate the reality of homeless people in Apache Junction, thus energizing community support, and help at-risk residents connect with support services to avoid becoming homeless.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After examining their research findings, each student generated his or her own recommendations for Apache Junction. The main areas of interest included what needs are most urgent, how businesses perceive homelessness in Apache Junction, and how the city can work collaboratively to find solutions. Since each student approached the topic from a different angle and with different methods, their recommendations overlap but vary. For example, the student who set out to examine solutions to homelessness prioritized collaboration in her recommendations as a way to implement services with less investment and demonstrate to the public that efforts are underway (Mettler, 4-19). Another student who analyzed funding resources stressed community input in her recommendations. This is because community participation
is essential to seeking funding and can provide traction for new initiatives (Serviss, 5-16). A third student, who focused on underlying causes of homelessness and related public perceptions in Apache Junction, stressed housing, transportation availability, and public awareness campaigns (Evans, 3-13).

Accordingly, student recommendations are useful to the city but will require discernment by city leaders to determine which recommendations are most applicable and beneficial. Each recommendation could use more input from residents and a deeper dive into its details, costs, and benefits. Following are paths for solutions for the city to consider, but it is up to Apache Junction to further define which options conform best to city priorities, constituencies, and resources.

**Provide Shelter**

1. Create transitional housing options. Consider recruiting small or large nonprofits like United Methodist Outreach Ministries (UMOM) or the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) to assist with this endeavor.
2. Ensure that any new low-income housing developments are either within walking distance of employment opportunities and support services or close to transportation to related parts of town.
3. Encourage landlords to participate in the housing choice voucher program.
4. Provide incentives for seasonal residents to rent out their units to provide temporary affordable housing while they are away.
5. Offer homeless individuals transportation to the nearest shelters in other cities if Apache Junction does not have such services. (However this may be poorly perceived in the destination cities if such a service is not coordinated with their permission.)

**Prioritize Transportation**

1. Host bicycle donation or repair drives to help provide access to transportation. These drives could be hosted by community members, a local business like Junction Bicycles, or through a mechanics trade school or other such organization.
2. The city or the Genesis Project could also reach out to private organizations and ask for donations to purchase bikes. Companies
like the Target Corporation can offer gift card donations to 501(c)3 organizations if they submit a donation request form. Bikes could be loaned to individuals until they reach self-sufficiency. Bike serial numbers could be logged to track loaned bikes.

3. Work with the Valley Metro bus system to coordinate reduced-fare options for homeless individuals. Currently this program requires documentation from individuals to prove qualification, which the homeless may not have. For example, the City of Phoenix’s Homeless Service Provider Program allows qualified organizations to purchase half-price fares for their clients. Another idea is to have a homeless service organization work with Valley Metro on an alternative verification process.

Collaborate

1. Fund a team of social workers or nonprofit counselors who follow through with homeless individuals to ensure they are receiving services and help them progress toward stability.

2. Coordinate efforts at an intermediary level with funders to identify different collaborations in which to participate. Such coordination by local governments can help prepare them to make the case to the community for increasing resources for the homeless.

3. Work with administrators of homelessness service providers to establish formal coordination behaviors as well.

4. Allot funding to ensuring that city personnel are connecting with the community, attending trainings, and participating in regional meetings. This way Apache Junction can be sure to get all resources available to help its homeless population.

5. Prioritize employment programs and case management services.

6. Do not criminalize the homeless for doing things like sleeping on private property or in parks, as this only exacerbates their situation. Rather offer opportunities to receive services or see program counselors.

7. Reach out to neighboring cities like Mesa to request police assistance in high-crime areas within a certain mileage of their city limits. This could create or help solidify reciprocal relationships between the cities. This would also limit demands placed on the Apache Junction police department and increase its law enforcement capacity.
**Build Public Awareness**

1. Use the Chronic Homeless Subcommittee to educate the downtown business community about services currently available for the homeless as well as any policy implementations designed to alleviate the problem, given that interviews indicate business owners are unaware of available resources for the homeless.

2. Appoint a residents’ subcommittee on homelessness to the Chronic Homeless Subcommittee to advise about community attitudes regarding the homeless population, as citizen buy-in is important to justifying additional budgetary emphasis on homelessness services (Serviss, 5-18).

3. Create a marketing internship position for educating the public about the facts of homelessness in their city.

4. With any public awareness campaign about homelessness in Apache Junction, aim to humanize homeless or at-risk individuals.

5. Invite city officials, and even disgruntled business owners, to participate in the Homeless Challenge, which challenges individuals to spend forty-eight hours on the streets to understand the daily experiences of homeless people.

6. Offer an incentive to students at local schools to submit videos that portray relatable characteristics about homeless people in Apache Junction.

7. Challenge the students to come up with other public awareness tactics. In this way, students are influenced to think critically about homelessness, learn about the resources that are available, or even provide fresh, unbiased solutions.

8. Recruit nonprofits to the city that are geared toward assisting the homeless to make a visible demonstration that the city is striving for solutions, and provide volunteer opportunities for citizens to get involved and be educated.

**Be Strategic About Policy**

1. Account for the seasonality of visible homelessness in Apache Junction when developing policy.

2. Recognize that while drug addiction is not the cause of all homelessness, it is an issue that should be taken into consideration when designing policy regarding homelessness (Andrews, 6-14).
AREAS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Apache Junction or future ASU students helping Apache Junction may want to consider using focus groups to gather additional community perception information, and sufficiently engage participants.

Regarding transportation options, a bikeshare program like Phoenix’s new Gridbikes might be beneficial for those in Apache Junction who don’t have transportation otherwise. However, such a program might have negative impacts on local bike shops, which is something Apache Junction should take into consideration.

CONCLUSION

According to the PIT count in 2017, there were 43 homeless people in Apache Junction. It is likely that there were other residents who were living in temporary situations or at risk of becoming homeless. Apache Junction is looking to address homelessness in the city. For their final projects in PAF 509: Public Affairs Capstone, eight graduate students conducted independent research and, based on his or her findings, generated recommendations. These included prioritizing access to housing; collaborating with organizations, residents, and other cities; and generating public awareness. While these studies were limited by time and resource constraints, they resulted in insightful pathways for Apache Junction to pursue as the city determines what solutions align best with its goals and opportunities. As it does so, Apache Junction will be improving living conditions for those most in need, as well as its broader community.