



#SolutionsNotSweepsATL Toolkit

Background:

A homeless sweep or “clean-up” is the forced disbanding of homeless encampments on public property and the removal of both homeless individuals and their property from that area. Over the decades research has repeatedly been shown sweeps accomplish nothing and, in fact, make the houseless and crime crises among American cities WORSE.

For many years the city of Atlanta [including the Atlanta Police Department and multiple organizations funded by the city] has been sweeping the housing crisis under the rug. Rather than providing adequate housing for its unhoused residents, the city has sanctioned their continual displacement while offering no support or pathway to stability.

The #SolutionsNotSweepsATL campaign was started by housed and unhoused Atlantans that are appalled by the city’s treatment of vulnerable people. Many of the people impacted by city sanctioned sweeps are elderly and disabled and have no means to continue bouncing from place to place, which is why we have come together to put a stop to the sweeps and demand actual SOLUTIONS.

#SolutionsNotSweepsATL is a push for Atlanta to adopt a Housing First model to end the housing crisis, end the criminalization of poverty and support its poor, working class, and unhoused citizens and meet our first demand, housing justice.

Our Solutions:

1. Adequate Permanent Housing
2. Accessible Healthcare
3. A Seat At The Table
4. Decriminalize Homelessness
5. Water & Sanitation

Organizing Principles:

1. We center and prioritize Atlanta’s unhoused citizens; taking direction and moving with consent from them.
2. We fight for full housing-first solutions that are non-discriminative to any of Atlanta’s unhoused citizens.
3. We understand the interconnectedness of all struggles against the oppressive forces that work to take away our fundamental rights and needs.



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Sweep Timeline:

August 2020: Organizers began mutual aid dinners with the unhoused community around the Georgia state capitol. This mutual aid grew to include weekly dinners, a free store, heating stations, cooling stations, hotel rooming, and the meeting of people's basic needs.

May 2021: Unhoused community members began talks of forming a homeless union to end homelessness in Atlanta. Inspired by movements in Kansas City, Philadelphia, and California, they launched the Atlanta Homeless Union with an occupation of City Hall on July 4th, 2021.

July 2021: Organizers began tracking and addressing sweeps of a downtown community, primarily comprised of Black elderly and disabled unhoused individuals. On an unknown Thursday, the community was swept and all of their belongings were taken. Organizers stepped up and purchased nearly 100 tents and sleeping bags and distributed them that Friday but by Saturday they had been swept again.

October 26-28 2021: On October 26th, several members of the same downtown community were taken to a training program and were offered a 1-month stay by a local mutual aid group. Although the folks that remained were not notified of a sweep, the Atlanta Police Department took the decreased number of people as an opportunity to sweep the entire street and put up concrete barriers on the sidewalk to prevent people from placing tents there in the future. This incident resulted in the arrests of eight community members and the displacement of nearly two dozen people.

February 25 2022: After being displaced in October many of those same community members set up camp on a nearby cross street and hunkered down during a brutal winter. During the week of 2/20-2/26 they got notice that they would once again be forced to move and were not offered any accommodations or solutions. After a sweep defense was coordinated, a local organization dedicated to "eradicating homelessness" came and "offered" a 30-day hotel stay if the sweep defense was canceled. Unfortunately, the organization did not follow through on their promise and left dozens of people on the streets to be swept days later.

May 25 2022: Having been moved from the new camp, the community moved back to the original sweep despite the concrete barriers still being there and re-established their camp. Ahead of the holiday weekend, APD planned to conduct sweeps in all of Zone 5, including this downtown community. Organizers planned a sweep defense but luckily no sweeps happened. Throughout this time mutual aid for the unhoused community continued.



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July 9 2022: After being given a 30-day eviction notice, APD officers and bulldozers arrived at the new camp three weeks early demanding that people relocate. APD offered no alternatives as far as where they should relocate to, no assistance with the physical labor of helping someone move everything they own, citing a weak “no urban camping” crime as the reason for the sudden evictions and ensuing theft of private, personal property. [\[Press Release\]](#)

July 25, 2022: #SolutionsNotSweeps campaign launched

Urban Camping Ordinance:

City Ordinance: Sec. 106-12. - Urban camping and improper use of public places

In 2017, Atlanta city council adopted Ordinance 106-12 that bans “urban camping” on city property, making it punishable by fines and arrest. In recent months the police have been using this ordinance to enact sweeps on homeless communities across the city with little to no notice.

It shall be unlawful for any person to camp.(c) It shall be unlawful for any person to store personal property.(d)It shall be unlawful for any person to interfere with ingress and egress.(e)No person may be arrested for violating this code section until s/he has received an oral or written warning from the Atlanta Police Department to cease the prohibited conduct. If the violator fails to comply with the warning issued, s/he may be arrested for violation of this section.(f)Where personal property is stored in violation of subsection (c) above, the Atlanta Police Department may deem the property to be abandoned and may confiscate it. No warning is required prior to the confiscation. The department shall retain the property in a manner consistent with the handling of other confiscated property.(g)The prohibitions set forth in subsections (b) and (c) above shall not apply during a permitted outdoor event on property where the outdoor event is located, as set forth in a city-issued outdoor event permit, unless the permit explicitly prohibits the activity.(h)The prohibitions set forth in subsections (c) and (d) above shall not apply to activity permitted pursuant to Article III of City Code of Ordinances Chapter 138.(i)The prohibitions set forth in this section 106-12 shall not apply to city, state, or county officials or employees acting in their official capacity, performing the activities as part of their official city duties.(j)The prohibitions set forth in this section 106-12 shall not apply to city, state, or county contractors or subcontractors where said activities are associated and performed in conjunction with the scope of work set forth in the city contract.

Calls To Action:

Contact Local Officials

Join Our Social Media Campaign



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Get Involved

Talking Points:

- Atlanta's Urban camping law is another vehicle that allows sweeps to continue without offering any real structured solutions to the issue of homelessness. Displacement is not a viable option to solve the homelessness crisis - if taken off the law books and given the proper resources, communities would be able to find solutions that work best for them.
- Moving people around by harassing them away from certain areas will not solve the problem and only traumatizes and undermines this community, separating them from service providers and creating obstacles to accessing housing and services.
 - ◆ Sweeps make it nearly impossible for an individual to make material changes in their lives. They cause unstable living conditions, increased stress and anxiety, decreased quality of life, a worsening of mental and emotional health, and an increase of arrests.
- Sweeps maintain and amplify the often inescapable and vicious cycle of incarceration, homelessness, and generational poverty. Additionally, it emphasizes that Atlanta's poorest residents lack fundamental rights to their autonomy and personal belongings.
- By continuing the sweeps Andre Dickens, Atlanta City Council (specifically Jason Dozier, council person for the downtown area), and APD continue their failing attacks on Atlanta's unhoused communities while not providing a single **solution** to the increasing economic disparities amongst Atlanta residents.

Contact Local Officials:

Mayor Andre Dickens

adickens@atlantaga.gov

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Atlanta Mayor's Office- (404) 330-6100

Office of Communications (404) 330-6004

City Council Member Jason Dozier



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Partners For Home/Gateway

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Join Our Social Media Campaign:

Twitter:

Here are some sample tweets you can send out in support of the campaign.

- We need real housing solutions, not criminalization and sweeps. #SolutionsNotSweepATL
- Atlanta's urban camping law was written to criminalize homelessness and nothing else. Rather than allocating funds to address the issue @ATLCouncil and @AndreForAtlanta would give taxpayer dollars to @Atlanta_Police so they can harass and displace people with no where else to go
- @AndreForAtlanta show us that you are for ALL Atlantans and stop the sweeps. Every month dozens of people are displaced and have nowhere to go - unhoused residents need real Solutions not sweeps. #SolutionsNotSweepATL
- I'm joining #SolutionsNotSweepsATL to call on @AndreForAtlanta @Atlanta_Police and @ATLCouncil to show they care more about Atlanta Residents than politics. Let them know that displacement is NOT an option: bit.ly/SolutionsNotSweepsATL
- Homelessness disproportionately affects Black Atlantans and sweeps are just another form of police brutality. These city-sanctioned sweeps allow APD to continue its war on Black residents and enough is enough. #SolutionsNotSweepATL
- Despite having funds from federal and local grants, Atlanta's "Continuum of Care " continues to fail unhoused Atlantans in every way. They have hundreds of thousands of dollars yet no solutions to ending homelessness - why is that? @PartnersForHome
- Thousands of hotel and housing units sit vacant as our elected officials criminalize humans for sitting, sleeping or storing their belongings on the street. Why aren't you housing people? @AndreForAtlanta @ATLCouncil

Instagram/Facebook:

- We need real housing solutions, not criminalization and sweeps. The city's land is the people's land. #SolutionsNotSweepATL



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- Sweeps are a step backwards and only exist to hide the homeless crisis in our city. It only serves to increase in criminalization and incarceration at a time when Atlanta residents sent a clear message that it's time to move away from policing, criminalization and mass incarceration and into investing in community led initiatives. #SolutionsNotSweepATL
- Atlanta's urban camping law was written to criminalize homelessness and amplify the often inescapable and vicious cycle of incarceration and generational poverty. They emphasize that Atlanta's poorest residents lack fundamental rights to their autonomy and personal belongings and allow city officials unregulated authority to dictate where residents can exist. #SolutionsNotSweepATL
- Sweeps are another form of violence unhoused folks face everyday. People cannot focus on their needs and work on getting their needs met when they are constantly disrupted by APD, have their property stolen or destroyed, and run the risk of being put in the criminal justice system on the whim of the attending officer. City land is the people's land and if the city refuses to help people with dignity and respect, we will show them just how powerful community support can be. #SolutionsNotSweepATL

Images:

[Image Folder](#)

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