

PUBLICATION

Steven Hall Versus Atlanta

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The story reads like a legal thriller, complete with conspiracy theories, threats and innuendos – but it's all quite real, and centers around an Atlanta homeless shelter. The Metro Task Force for the Homeless occupies a building in Atlanta that sits on a valuable stretch of Peachtree Street. The building was donated to the task force by a Coca-Cola heir 14 years ago, and houses 500 to 700 men each night, nearly all of them African American. Atlanta leaders have long contended that the sight of these men, milling around before the shelter opens at night and streaming out again in the morning rush hour, hurts downtown business and tourism. City and business leaders have tried for years to cut off all funding for the shelter, using first one method and then another, and yet the shelter remains.

Baker Donelson attorney Steve Hall's pro bono work for the task force was originally pretty standard – a social security card application here and an ID card there. But in December 2008, he was called in to keep the shelter's water on. Since then, Mr. Hall has been involved in what many say is an epic power struggle for the task force's right to remain in the building, culminating in a lawsuit against A.J. Robinson and Central Atlanta Progress that claimed tortious interference with the business of the task force by means of cutting off funding for the shelter, stalling required certifications for the task force's federal and state grants, and disseminating disinformation to private support of the task force.

The full article detailing the many twists and turns the shelter has faced can be found in Terry Carter's "Battle of Atlanta," in the *ABA Journal's* May 2011 issue.