

TENT CITY: AN ANALYSIS OF HONOLULU'S HOMELESSNESS

**A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation of
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**

**In Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Urban Planning**

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By

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Abstract

This thesis examines the displacement of homeless and houseless individuals and families in Honolulu County Hawaii through the examination of rural and urban environments. The purpose of this study is to compare rural and urban homelessness with the goal of identifying whether and why homeless individuals in rural environments are better established than those in urban ones. What types of policies benefit the homeless in these areas and how can city policies and officials work collectively with those suffering from homeless in the urban core without allowing them to infringe on the basic rights of the general public? This study used qualitative data collected in both rural and urban homeless environments. After numerous surveys and interviews, the researcher found that: safety, partnerships with supporting agencies and access to shelter play the largest roles in the quality of life for the homeless.

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Background

This thesis examines the displacement of homeless and houseless individuals and families in Honolulu County Hawaii through the examination of rural and urban environments. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development defines homelessness under the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 91, 582, and 583 defines a homeless individual as “an individual who lacks housing (without regard to whether the individual is a member of a family), including an individual whose primary residence during the night is a supervised public or private facility (e.g., shelters) that provides temporary living accommodations, and an individual who is a resident in transitional housing.” A homeless person is an individual without permanent housing who may live on the streets; stay in a shelter, mission, single room occupancy facilities, abandoned building or vehicle; or in any other unstable or non-permanent situation. Individuals that are being evicted within a week from a private dwelling unit with no subsequent residence identified, and that are lacking resources and support networks to obtain housing are also considered homeless. For the purposes of this study, the terms “homeless” and “houseless” will be used synonymously.

The purpose of this study is to compare rural and urban homelessness with the goal of identifying why homeless individuals in rural environments are better established than those in urban ones. What types of policies benefit the homeless in these areas and how can city policies and officials work collectively with those suffering from homeless in the urban core without infringing on the basic rights of the general public? This study uses qualitative data collected in both rural and urban homeless environments. Through this research, quality of life indicators of the homeless in both rural and urban environments will be assessed and recommendations will be made regarding potential community development and housing policies that assist these populations in permanently exiting homelessness.

Although the jobless rate in Honolulu, Hawaii is below 5%, the expensive price of housing keeps many employed homeless residents on the streets according to *The Economist* (2014). The average monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Honolulu is more than \$2,700; which is one of the highest in America. With the average renter spending up to fifty percent of their total net income on housing, it is of no surprise that those with making lower earnings often find themselves homeless or on the verge of being homeless.

This epidemic of low vacancy of affordable housing, amongst other factors, has led to the state being ranked #1 for homelessness in the nation. According to the Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness 2015 Point in Time Count (PIT), Hawaii had a staggering 7,260 homeless with the island of Oahu having the majority of homelessness throughout the islands at 4,903 individuals. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the total population of

Oahu at 953,207 total persons. Thus, the homelessness rate on Oahu is about 51 homeless individuals per 10,000 persons on the island. Compared to the current homelessness rate in the United States of 18.3 homeless individuals per 10,000, the homeless rate in Hawaii is significantly higher. Due to the severity of homelessness throughout Hawaii, Governor David Ige declared a State of Emergency in October 2015 in order to garner additional federal and state funding to support the process of homeless shelter developments throughout the island of Oahu.

Among the homeless population of Oahu, there are those that have shelter and those that do not. Most homeless families have been able to acquire and maintain shelter (88% according to the HICH PIT). However, 1,654 individuals were found unsheltered according to the most recent count in 2015. The majority of these unsheltered individuals set up squatter settlements in the state capital of Honolulu. Although pockets of unsheltered individuals are found through various developed areas in Honolulu, large squatter settlements have been found near Ala Moana Beach Park at Kaka'ako and in parks close to primary tourism destinations in the downtown commercial business district and Waikiki Beach.

To mitigate and dismantle these squatter settlements, Mayor Kirk Caldwell issued a high visibility anti-nuisance ordinance under the title "Compassionate Disruption" in June of 2014. This initiative specifically targeted the homeless population prohibiting sitting and lying in business and commercially zoned public sidewalks with the aim of these sweeps to force people into shelters so that they could receive state social services and begin their exits out of homelessness (Dunson-Strane & Soakai 2015). According to the 2015 study *The Effects of City Sweeps and Sit-Lie Policies on Honolulu's Houseless*, these sweeps negatively affected the homeless individuals through (1) physical and psychological harm, (2) possible constitutional violations, and most notably through (3) economic loss and the loss of personal property. Personal property loss such as state and federal identification cards, medicine, clothing, food, and their personal tents were confiscated by Honolulu Police Department Officers conducting the sweeps. According to the study, 67% of those surveyed had their identification cards taken and not returned as of August 2015 (Dunson-Strane & Soakai 2015).

While Honolulu City Hall claims that this initiative was successful in putting 772 homeless individuals into emergency shelters or transitional housing (Nakaso 2016), there are many unsheltered homeless persons and families that choose not to use these facilities. Some of these families and individuals are found living along the coast in rural areas of Oahu where they live off the land and sea and are supported through local religious institutions and nonprofit organizations. Waianae, located along the Western Coast of Oahu, is one such area of particular interest due to its predominantly Hawaiian population.

Thirty percent of the Waianae population is Native Hawaiian according to the 2013 US Census Bureau American Community Survey. Waianae is host to the largest squatter settlements on the island with one settlement near Waianae Boat Harbor containing 107 dwellings and 278 people spread over 19 acres (Mendoza 2015). The Boat Harbor settlement has a well established community with defined leaders, rules, and ethics. Interviews with homeless individuals that live there indicate their preference for rural living communities and claim that "shelter

housing just isn't adequate". Some of the people in this community have low wage jobs and use various social services to supplement expenses for basic needs. With that being said, shelters normally have fees associated with stay that some homeless individuals deem "unaffordable". Emergency shelters can also fill to capacity, turning away the homeless back to the street and disallowing tenants to stay during the day. The overall dependability of housing initiatives to exit homelessness are called into question due to these facts and will be addressed in this study.

This study is important because housing is rarely looked at through the lens of homeless individuals. Those living in rural homelessness may be able to tell us how we as planners can better support them. Concurrently, those individuals experiencing homelessness within the urban core can provide planners context and detail in how these policies affect them. Hawaii also has a significant housing shortage playing a primary role in keeping marginalized populations homeless. In the September 2015 Affordable Housing Strategy, the Hawaii Community Development Authority (HCDA) projected that Oahu requires 24,000 total housing units to meet the housing needs for 2016. Eighteen thousand affordable housing units are required to meet the demand of households earning less than 80% of area median income (AMI) or \$53,800. Contrary to this need, housing production over the last five years has averaged 2,080 housing units per year (HCDA 2015). At this rate, it would take approximately eleven years to meet the housing needs for 2016. The population of Oahu continues to grow, yet lands remain underdeveloped. Short term solutions to housing such as emergency shelters and transitional housing can be expected to overflow if action isn't taken to address the homeless community. There are currently 49 emergency shelters and transitional housing programs available throughout the island of Oahu. This inaction further stagnates community development throughout the island.

The homeless/ houseless population is especially at risk to the elements of Oahu as many of these settlements can be found close to the shoreline. Within the past twenty-five years, the island state has been subject to major tropical storms, cyclones, and hurricanes which have caused both structural and flood damage to the island shores. These conditions are further enhanced by the risk of fire due to dry humidity along the western coast line.

Although the degree of threat is often argued, the overall consensus is that those persons that live on or near shorelines are at risk of flood or severe storm. Without shelter the homeless/ houseless beach communities are at perpetual risk of such conditions.

In addition to the risk of potential storms, the homeless/ houseless community are stranded geographically in an area with a non-permissive affordable housing environment which has precluded them from obtaining housing compared to other states on the mainland. The island is subject to limited development and expansion due to its small size in comparison to larger mainland cities and states. Development initiatives that have worked on the mainland, such as the Housing First initiative are easier to achieve due to lower costs of development and lower land values. Examples of this can be found in states such as Utah and New York who have used the Housing First approach to get homeless individuals and families into housing. In addition to being separated geographically to initiatives that work on the mainland, homeless subpopulations from the Marshall Islands and Micronesia are also

divided geographically from their homes due to searching for perceived better lives in the United States. Both the Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) garner health and human services support through a Compact Free Association with the United States, despite being sovereign nations (US Department of State 2016). The dependency on services from the US has attracted numerous individuals and families that actively seek services. Some of these families are unable to better their situation and have instead set up tent communities in the commercial corridor of Honolulu contributing to the overall poverty rates throughout Oahu.

A key ethical consideration in Urban Planning and community development is acknowledging marginalized populations and being able to understand the needs of the homeless community. This research is relevant to planners, social service caseworkers, and others that assist the homeless community of Oahu. While Oahu has gained national attention due to its high rate of homelessness, few studies have attempted to gain personal perspective from the homeless themselves. Empowering this community with a voice is the greatest contribution of this study.

Literature Review

Causes of Homelessness

There have been numerous theories as to why individuals and families become homeless. Widely held public beliefs are that the poor who are homeless are one of two reasons: Either they are a product of their environment and a result of social institutions or individually responsible for their own socio-economic position.

Publicly held views have also dominated news streams. The biggest issue facing sociologists, urban planners, and scholars has been identifying what causes a person to become homeless. There is no definitive explanation, although clear sides have been created regarding the issue. The structural position regards homelessness as an “outcome of external, macro-level forces over which people have little control” (Lee, Lewis Jones 1992). Within this issue lies the central forces of economic conditions, housing availability, and changes in mental health policy and welfare provisions, and incidents of recession among others (HUD 2014). Family dynamics play a significant role, especially regarding women, their marital status, and whether or not they have children (Chandler 1989). The contrast to the structural position is that of individual traits and choices that lead into homelessness. These traits can include mental illness, substance abuse, and deficits in talent or motivation.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) claims that insufficient income and lack of affordable housing are the leading causes of homelessness. In 2012, 10.3 million renters had “extremely low incomes” (ELI) as classified by the Housing Spotlight Study (HUD 2012). According to the study, only 5.8 million affordable housing units were available to low income groups. Additionally, only 31 out of every 100 units of affordable housing became available to ELI renters. The availability of affordable housing has continued to shrink in many of the major cities throughout the United States.

The foreclosure crisis of 2008 has had long lasting effects on homeless groups nationally. The fluctuation and rise of non-fixed high interest loans targeted at lower income ethnic minorities pushed many families with mortgages into poverty (Alshehhi Febuary Macquillon & Williamson 2014). According to a June 2010 study conducted by the National Law Center on Homeless & Poverty, national homelessness rose 61% since the beginning of the foreclosure crisis. In 2012, the same researchers found that 40% of families facing eviction were renters. This economic crisis is further exacerbated by federal changes in welfare time limits. According to *The State of the Nation's Housing 2015* annual report, there is an estimated deficit of 4 million homes.

At Risk Populations

The 2012 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) To Congress (HUD 2012) revealed that when compared to the total population and those living in poverty, those who are homeless are more likely to be adult, male, African American, not elderly, unaccompanied and disabled.

The same study revealed that one out 141 persons in black families stayed in a homeless shelter compared with one out of every 990 persons in white families. In Hawaiian context the African American population marginalized in this study is comparable to the Native Hawaiian population which is the most at risk population on Oahu. African Americans comprise 3% of the total population of Oahu while those of Asian descent comprise the majority (42% according to ACS 2015).

Studies show that women outside of traditional nuclear families that are attempting to raise children are the most at risk population for homelessness nationally (with some restraints) and stay in poverty longer than men. In Hawaii, 33% of all single mothers are below the poverty line (Chandler & Williams 1989). Young single mothers often work full-time at lower wage jobs because of their inability to achieve higher degrees of education. Changes in family structure to a female headed household often occur as a result of divorce or separation, and wedlock births. Restructuring of families from these two occurrences negatively impacts their quality of life because most mothers are unable to earn sufficient income to support themselves and their children. Single mothers in multigenerational households are less at risk and are able to capture some family support. However, when single mothers live in multigenerational families of only women, they are at greater risk of staying in poverty (Chandler & Williams).

Outside of gender, individual characteristics make some people more at risk to homelessness than others. Individuals with substance abuse issues, mental illnesses, family discord, and domestic violence issues have a higher chance becoming homeless (Fitzpatrick 2005). A lack of work ethic, propensity to wander, and laziness are also individual factors that can lead to homelessness (Lee 2009). In addition, individuals currently living in poverty are constantly in danger to becoming homeless especially with the rise of rental prices. Studies of Neighborhood Change show that those in poverty have a tendency to stay in poverty (Cortright and Mahmoudi 2014). Any increases in rent force individuals in poverty to move. On average, low income renters will move at least twice in less than three years. Cortright and Mahmoudi's 2014 Neighborhood Change study found that neighborhoods that don't see poverty reduction do not remain stable and remain high poverty neighborhoods.

Hawaiian Context

An increase in academic research specific to Hawaiian homelessness occurred between 2013 and 2015. Researchers from the University of Hawaii conducted a study of the Effects of City Sweeps and Sit –Lie Policies on Honolulu’s Houseless in 2015. The study surveyed members of the homeless community within the urban core of Honolulu to assess the effects of the revamped public nuisance laws on that population. The new sit-lie ordinances issued by the Mayor of Honolulu had a profoundly negative effect on the well-being of this population, despite its stated good intentions to place them into shelter. The reported effects of police sweeps within homeless camps caused significant property and economic losses. Of specific interest was the loss of identification that when compromised, makes employment and housing attainment very difficult for homeless individuals and families. Additionally, penalties in the form of fines and jail time tarnished homeless individuals by giving them a criminal record which in turn significantly reduces their opportunities for employment.

In addition to those effects, only 11% of the respondents stated that they would seek shelter after a sweep, 21% reported they were less likely to seek shelter due to the sweep, and 68% reported that the sweeps had no effect on whether or not they would seek shelter. The implications of these respondents not only reflect negatively on the use of these laws, they also have a detrimental effect for the actual use of transitional and emergency shelters.

Additional research conducted by Dr. Martin McDonnell of University of Utah in 2014 examined Squatter settlements, or what he calls “beach dwellings”, along the West Coast of Oahu. The study is especially relevant to this research in that it focuses on the same locations, population groups, and themes. Dr. McDonnell’s study focuses on the self-perceptions and identity of beach dwellers in Waianae from a sociological standpoint. Interestingly, the beach dwellers identified themselves as “houseless” and not homeless. Hawaiians living on the fringe in squatter settlements have lived in these enclaves as long as ten years. Of the sixteen people surveyed, fifteen lived in tents, while one individual lived in a car. One single female head of household was included in this survey.

McDonnell’s study examined interdependency within social networks of homeless beach dwellers on the West Coast of Oahu. The members of McDonnell’s study had many characteristics in common, the most prominent was that they were all living in poverty. He used the Norms and Efficacy model to examine how beach dwellers depended on each other. The Norms and Efficacy model postulates that neighborhood influencers are accounted for by the extent of a communities’ formal and informal institutions (Leventhal 2010). Basically the formal and informal rules both spoken and unspoken by the community control the way of life within that community. This is the main concept in grassroots organization and community development.

McDonnell’s study lacks details in how his study sample arrived in Waianae and more specifically how they became homeless. He does not mention if his study sample were products of multi-generational living or whether they were displaced from the urban core due to the lack of affordable housing or a lack of resources for housing. He also fails to link the number of actual families living in the boat harbor. Studies in the past state that squatting in rural

environments outside of the urban core is caused by the erosion of rural employment and an increase in single-parent families in small towns. If single mothers are unable to maintain employment in these rural environments, then they are likely to become homeless (Fitchen 1992). Mothers with young children have to watch their kids and may be unable to do so.

Studies have shown that squatters in both rural and urban environments do so out of desperation and because they are on the verge of going homeless. According to Jeff Peterson's (1991) study of squatters in the United States and Latin America, over two-thirds of squatter settlements involve four groups of families or more. Squatters are often motivated to form groups because the lack of services available to them forces them to be interdependent. In a rural context, squatters with families also set up camps outside of urban areas because of the reduced chances for crime and because there is a less chance of being evicted by authorities (Peterson 1991).

The Cost of Homelessness in Hawaii

The cost of homelessness to Hawaii is high especially for those with chronic illness because they have no regular place to stay, and use public systems inefficiently. According to a 2009 study by the Hawaii Department of Human Services and Queens Medical Hospital, the average cost for an unsheltered homeless person is \$2,897 monthly, more than four times higher than the average public cost for residents in supportive housing (\$605). Public costs for these unsheltered individuals can vary by age, gender, or other individual attributes, however, public costs increase for unsheltered homeless if they are older, unemployed, disabled, suffering from mental illness, and or/ are substance abusers. At a minimum, the public costs for a single able-bodied adult with no criminal record, record of substance abuse, and no mental illness are an average of \$406 per visit to Hawaii taxpayers. These visits include emergency room, emergency psychiatric care, and substance abuse services. Compounded individual factors of adult males with mental illness and a record of substance abuse can costs up to \$5,308 for a single visit.

According to the study, 38% of all public costs for those who are unsheltered are healthcare related. Admissions of homeless people in Hawaii revealed that 1,751 adults were responsible for 564 hospitalizations and over \$4 million in hospital admission costs. Of those hospital stays, psychiatric treatment was sought 100 times more often by homeless individuals than non-homeless patients. Substance abuse treatments cost Hawaii taxpayers over \$4,800 while the average stay was \$4,519 in 2009.

Imprisoning the homeless is also expensive. As discussed earlier, Mayor Caldwell's "Compassionate Disruption" Initiative can put some homeless individuals into the prison system for up to 30 days. The average cost of imprisonment to the public is \$113 dollars a day (Sabol and West 2009) and does not include any bail fees for the actual homeless individuals involved.

Housing

The need for housing in Hawaii is nothing new and can be traced back to September 1990 when the US One Hundred and First Congress conducted a hearing before the Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs addressing the varying needs and conditions of the Hawaiian housing market. In 1990, the United States was in a recession due to the 1987 stock market crash. The housing market at the time presented signs of weakness due to a large number of savings and loan associations (private banks that specialized in home mortgages) going bankrupt (Berkeley 2015). During this timeframe, Senator David Akaka addressed the congress of Hawaii's housing needs stating that the median price for a home on Oahu was \$392,200 (An increase of \$29,000 from the month prior) and required an annual income of \$92,928 to be afforded. Adjusting for inflation equates to a required annual income of \$169,103 today. According to the 2014 US Census ACS 1 year estimate, the median price for a home is now upwards of \$530,000. That being said, the area median income of Hawaii for a household of three (the average household of Oahu) is \$78,200 according to the 2014 US Census Bureau 5 year American Community Survey (ACS). Thus, purchasing a home in Hawaii was reserved for the wealthy and explains why the housing inventory was and is predominantly rental. The vacancy rate for rental housing during 1990 was 1.5% for a one bedroom rental which has tightened to a 1% vacancy rate today.

The most recent study for Honolulu's Affordable Rental Housing was conducted by the Department of Community Services (DCS) and County of Honolulu in December of 2014. In their affordable housing study, they focused exclusively on residential housing markets and used US Census information, reports on homelessness, online rental property advertising information, and news articles to update the outdated 2011 Rental Housing Study. According to the study, the total housing units in Honolulu was 329,724 with 92% of them occupied (using US Census 2010 ACS data). Roughly 26,000 units were vacant with a third of them accessible to those seeking residential housing. However, the majority of those units were located in upscale neighborhoods (such as Waikiki and Makiki) and close to schools which placed them in high demand. Due to the high demand for these homes, these households remained unaffordable to low and middle class individuals.

There is a high demand and low supply of housing that has remained in Honolulu since the recession of 1990. This high demand is further backed by Honolulu's economy. The County draws in more than 4.4 million visitors each year, with more than 2600 businesses involved in hospitality and leisure according to the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT). Honolulu's unemployment rate has also declined to less than 5% and has one of the top ten lowest jobless rates in the nation (DEBDT). The unemployment rate is deceptive in the sense that it does not reveal how many people work multiple jobs to make ends meet. In addition to the

booming tourism industry, Oahu is host to one of the largest military forces on the planet (hosting some 64,000 personnel and their dependents) which also caters to the economic development of the island.

Housing in both ownership and rental is expensive and high demand in Honolulu. Housing is expensive that the cost of housing is beyond the means of many households on Oahu. According to the Center for Housing Policy's Paycheck to Paycheck Rankings (2013), Honolulu is the most expensive Metropolitan Statistical Area nationwide for renting. The income needed for a one bedroom rental (no more than 30% of income for fair market rent, which includes utilities) cost \$56,000 to lease, while a one bedroom in New York costs \$49,720.

Oahu has been undergoing population growth which has further increased the demand for housing. By 2020, Oahu is forecasted to host 1,003,700 in total population. In order to accommodate the projected future growth, 16,200 dwellings will be needed to accommodate future housing needs. To date, 1,803 units have been built from 2010-2013 capable of meeting this need, leaving more than 14,310 more units necessary by 2020 (DBEDT 2013) .

Estimated housing needs from the 2014 Rental Housing Study indicate a combined deficit of 31,197 dwellings for the local population of Oahu. This shortage of housing exists for a number of factors including the limited amount of development permits and the high cost and risk of development. The 2014 DCS report considers the following as factors to this expected housing shortage.

- There is a large past and future demand for housing to include military absorption of local rental stock
- Housing Shortage due to visitor absorption of local rental stock
- Restrictive housing policies for development
- High demand housing prices and low income
- Obsolescence of housing stock by 2020
- Public and private sector risks

Because the housing supply is tight and demand is high, the DCS concludes that renters with lower income are at significant risk of being displaced or homeless in the future. Renter families coming from lower income communities make up approximately 80% of the area's median income (AMI) or lower. Those that are making at or fewer than 60% AMI are facing no rental unit availability. This means that 28% of the total 310,141 households on Oahu are faced with the possibility of no available housing unless they can procure some means of assistance. This has lead to current crowding conditions and will undoubtedly lead to crowding and homelessness in the future. To make matters worse, the lag time in the development of additional affordable housing will fall short of fulfilling housing needs by 2020.

The cost of housing constrains household budgets wherein family heads will be forced to decide precedence of basic needs (housing, food, work, children, school, medical) all of which play into personal intra familial difficulties and future conflicts. This can lead to families going homeless and living in the bushes of someone else's land or lead to families doubling up with other families (crowding).

From a landowner's standpoint, these future housing constraints can lead to developing multi-tenant houses to rent room out to families who share the bathrooms or landlords illegally subdividing their rental units to serve their personal needs.

Exiting Homeless Programs

Homelessness is a long standing social issue in the United States. The emergence of homelessness as a social problem dates as far back as 1980 when it was first observed in areas such as inner city Los Angeles in areas like Skid Row (Polakow 2001). Since then, many intervention strategies have been utilized to defeat the growing epidemic of homelessness.

Intervention strategies come in four main categories: emergency shelter, transitional shelter, housing first, and outreach services. Intervention strategies combine shelter care (both emergency and transitional shelters) into one category labeled "Treatment First". On Oahu, there are 22 total shelters that cater to the needs of the homeless population. Emergency shelters on Oahu have a total bed capacity of approximately 1249 beds. As of 2015, 1049 (84%) of these bed spaces were used according to the 2015 Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH) Point-in-Time (PIT) count. Transitional shelters on Oahu have a total bed capacity of 2,280 beds but only 1,970 (86%) were used in 2015 (HICH PIT Report 2015).

Shelters

Emergency shelters are facilities with the primary purpose of providing temporary shelter for homeless individuals as defined by the 2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress (AHAR 2015). In addition to sleeping quarters, emergency shelters can also provide a variety of services such as medical treatments and mental health treatments. Some even offer job training (McDonnell 2014). While emergency shelters are convenient as an alternative from sleeping in crowded apartments, parks, or cars, their first come first serve programming can lead to overcrowding and exclusion in these structures. Other drawbacks for couples and families include the separation of sleeping quarters between males and females.

During the Point-In-Time Count for AHAR, there were 564,708 homeless counted in the United States. Less than half of those homeless counted (205,616) were staying in emergency or transitional shelters. Of the total within the United States, 7,620 homeless were counted in Hawaii during November 2015. 3,843 homeless persons were counted as unsheltered. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) 2013-2014 Report, the average length of stay of individuals in emergency shelters was 120 days. Families were reported as staying in

emergency shelters 96 days on average. On Oahu, the average stay for families in emergency shelters is 193 days according to the University of Hawaii Center on the Family.

Transitional shelters, in contrast to the first come first serve care of emergency shelters, provide individuals and families with a stable living environment. Parents are able to seek employment opportunities and permanent housing while staying in transitional shelters. However, some drawbacks to this housing concept are the loss of privacy and independence for families and individuals. Transitional shelters have several requirements that may include curfews, signing in and out, twelve step meetings for substance abusers, and limited visitation times among other restraints. While transitional shelters provide many services to their tenants, previous studies regarding how they perceived by tenants have had mixed reviews. One study conducted qualitative interviews with 29 homeless adults. The sample was asked what issues they had with transitional shelters to which many responded that a variety of housing services were underused, service providers could not be trusted, and policies in transitional shelter were too restrictive (Ryan and Thomson 2012).

The primary justification for transitional housing is to steer tenants away from homelessness and prepare them for stable and permanent housing conditions. If individuals and families follow the rules and have a successful transition away from the risks of becoming homeless, then permanent housing will be assigned to them. Residents in this program stay an average of 18 months in the United States (NAEH 2013). On Oahu, the average stay in transitional housing is one year according to the University of Hawaii Center on the Family.

Services

There are two service delivery methods used in the United States: Treatment First and Housing First. The Treatment First model positions permanent housing at the end of treatment. Treatment first forces homeless individuals to go through transitional shelters. If residents of these shelters are compliant and successful with their assigned program, which may include substance abuse treatment or job placement training, then they will be placed into permanent housing. The underlying philosophy of treatment first approaches is that “the change must occur at the individual level before one can transition into permanent housing...The end to homelessness depends on the individual's ability to first learn to manage the conditions or causal factor which led to his or her crisis” (McDonnell 2014).

The Housing First model in contrast starts clients off with permanent, independent apartments. Service providers and caseworkers work with housing first clients regardless of their symptoms or whether they participate in treatment. Housing First began out of response to chronic homelessness among persons with multiple addictions. The model was developed as an alternative to the Treatment First approach. Housing First has proven effective by providing individuals with housing up front, rather than forcing clients to prove their sobriety (McDonnell 2014). This approach offers some financial assistance to pay for housing, usually in the form of the first month's rent or short-

term rent subsidies. This short term financing approach promotes self-reliance and personal responsibility all while minimizing the amount of time people are homeless.

Between these two approaches, overwhelming evidence favors Housing First approaches over Treatment First. In a 2007 study, researchers examined the archival data over a 5-year period and reported that 88% of Housing First clients remained housed compared to 47% of clients conducting traditional transitional treatment (Goldstein 2007). Research suggests that the most successful intervention strategy for ending homelessness is permanent supportive housing that meets the needs of individuals or families.

Hawaiian Services

Hawaiian Human Services operate within both Treatment First and Housing First Programs. The Hawaii Department of Human Services (DHS) provides state level assistance programs through its Benefit, Employment and Support Services Division. These programs include providing funds in the form of Temporary Assistance for needy families (TANF) and temporary assistance for other needy families (TAONF). Through these programs monthly cash is given to qualifying families for food, clothing, shelter, and other essentials. The goal of this program is to provide a safety net for families when they cannot work or are under-employed; and to help parents find and maintain employment; and self-sufficiency. According to the 2014 DHS Annual Report, 8,927 families used TANF in 2014 with monthly assistance averaging \$531. TANF and TAONF require compliance with substance abuse and rehabilitation programs, medical treatments, and skill building programs. In addition to TANF, General Assistance (GA) provides cash benefits for food, clothing, shelter, and other essential to adults ages 18-64 without minor dependents who are temporarily disabled. These programs are all state funded.

On the island of Oahu, the Homeless Programs Office (HPO) provides homeless individuals and families with shelter and supportive services. HPO strives to empower the homeless by assisting them in attaining permanent housing, and by implementing homeless prevention programs. According to the 2014 DHS Annual Report, the three primary services they provide are:

- creating individual plans and programs at transitional living facilities and strategic planning for development
- providing contracts with private entities for the delivery of shelter and services to mitigate and eliminate homelessness and;
- Managing programs and shelter properties to maximize the state's homeless resources.

Both the city of Honolulu and state of Hawaii have Housing First Programs, but so far efforts are small compared with the need for housing. According to Honolulu Civil Beat, the Hawaii State Legislature set aside \$1.5 million dollars to house 75 people. The city invested \$2 million dollars into the housing first program in order to house 115 households. Priority for housing is given to children and families. Those numbers represent only 2% of the 7,620

homeless individuals within the state. The lack of sufficient housing inventory and high price of rents is challenging for a Housing First Approach.

The following map shows the current locations of all services throughout the island of Oahu. Service types include: Family Strengthening Services, Health Services, State Low-Income Services, Substance Abuse Services, Emergency Shelters, and Transitional Housing Shelters. Most services can be found near the commercial business district (56 out of 96) with the majority of the state's low income services in this area. In contrast, those living in rural homelessness have 11 services that support them locally with the majority being transitional housing shelters, which (this study shows) aren't popular amongst the locale.

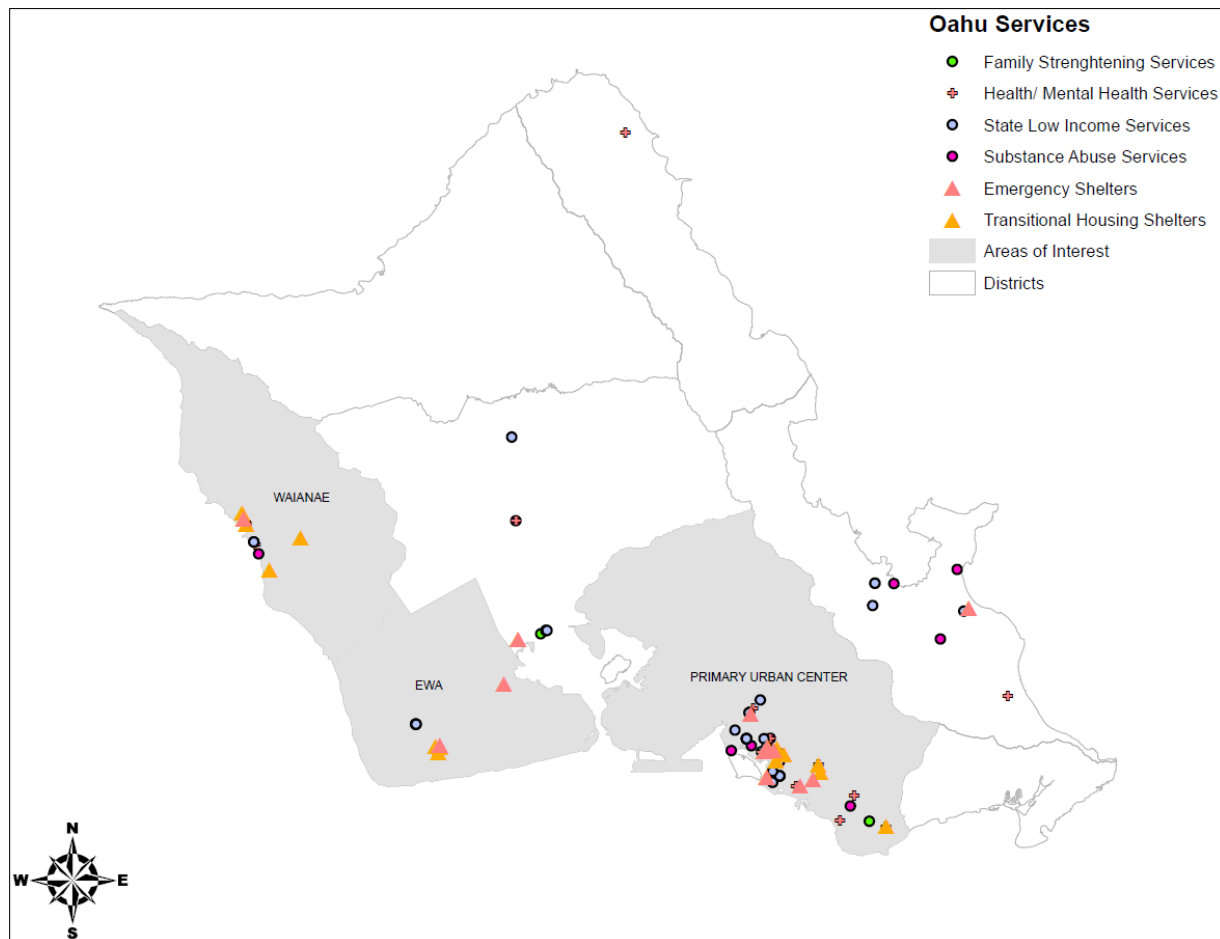


Figure 1: Social Services of Oahu (Source: Data Aggregated from US Department of Housing and Urban Development and P.A.R.E.N.T.S Oahu)

Research Design

In examining the rural and urban informal populations of Honolulu, four distinct steps were required:

1. Assessing the history of homeless/ homelessness throughout Honolulu County.
2. Reviewing literature pertaining to homelessness, neighborhood change and community development.
3. Conducting interviews and surveys of houseless heads of households in rural, urban, and transitional housing.
4. Conducting field observations of community engagement amongst locale and supporting systems.

Surveys were conducted between January 2, 2016 and January 10th, 2016 among houseless heads of households on the West side of Oahu and within the primary urban center of Oahu. The West side of Oahu included two study sites: Waianae Boat Harbor and Nanakuli. The primary urban center of Oahu consisted of three study sites: A'ala Park in Chinatown; Ala Wai Park near Waikiki, and Kaka'ako Community Park.

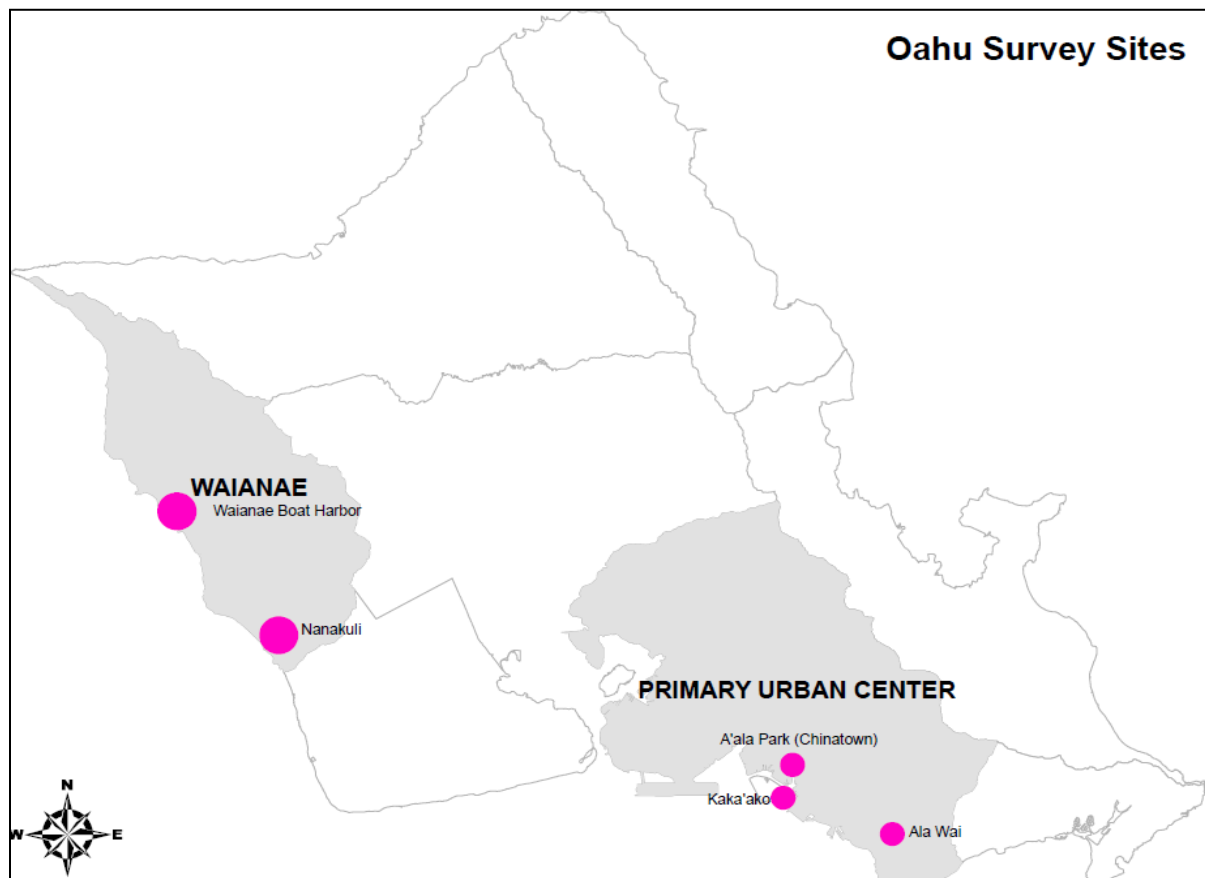


Figure 2: Oahu Survey Sites

Survey Areas

A'ala Park (Chinatown)

A'ala Park in Chinatown is located at the intersection of North King Street and North Beretenia. The site consists of a 6.5 acre public park. The park is zoned as a general preservation area with surrounded by mid-rise commercial office buildings to the East and a large industrial area to the South. A'ala Park is separated from the Downtown area by a stream that runs north to South (Nu'anua stream). The A'ala Park site had an estimated eighty individuals using the site January 2, 2016. Many individuals were found seeking shelter under trees with minimal individual shelter (tents) although there were some that had built shelters out of shopping carts and blankets to provide shade for themselves.

Kaka'ako Waterfront Park

The Kaka'ako Waterfront Park is located in the Kaka'ako Community District of urban Honolulu. The area is located between the downtown central business district and Waikiki and is bordered to the South by the Pacific Ocean. The 23 acre park is zoned as a preservation area with a mix of industrial, commercial, high density residential areas surrounding the park. Approximately fifty homeless individuals were observed using the park on January 4, 2016. The homeless community was a mix of multi-generational families, middle-aged adults and some children. Many individuals used tarps tied to trees for shade. Some individuals had sleeping bags and additional mattress pads for comfort as well.

Ala Wai Golf Course

The Ala Wai Golf Course is located in the primary urban center of Honolulu. The homeless site is located just outside the golf course fence on the North East corner near the intersection Kapahulu Avenue and Hoolulu Street. The small 2.5 acre site is located along the tree line of the Date Street walking trail. Land use and zoning around the Ala Wai site is mixed with medium and high density residential and one to two story commercial buildings. There were approximately fifteen people using this area as a campsite on January 4, 2016. The homeless using this site consisted of a mix of middle-aged male and female groups. Many individuals were well accommodated with tents and sleeping bags. This homeless using this area were transient throughout the morning and mid-afternoon, but would set up their tents prior to dusk.

Nanakuli

The Nanakuli site is located approximately 3.5 miles South of Waianae and comprises of approximately 11 acres of undeveloped grasslands that are situated between Farrington Highway and Lualualei Naval Road. The encampment is located directly behind the Sack and Save market. Vehicle access to the area is restricted as a US government emergency access road divides the tract from Lualualei Naval Road to Helelua Place. The area is relatively flat with minimal slope. Low density residential housing surrounds the site. Single family home plots surround the site using half acre lots. The land use is characterized by a large box store with parking lot. The Nanakuli encampment had an estimated forty individuals using the site.

Waianae Boat Harbor

The Waianae Boat Harbor is located on the makai side (oceanside) of Farrington Highway and Ala Walua Road. The site comprises of approximately 20 acres of undeveloped preservation lands located next to the commercial boat harbor. The harbor is a preservation area for the brackish water shrimp “Opae Ula”. The area is also a Hawaiian burial ground. Low density residential housing and public institutions surround the site to the North, East, and West as well as neighborhood commercial areas that support the boat harbor operations. According to Camp Manager Rose Loke Chung-Lono, the site was home to 268 residents on January 7, 2016 which include middle-aged males, females, and numerous families with children.

Survey Site Selection

Waianae and Chinatown were originally chosen as the primary study sites after reviewing the 2013 US Census Bureau 3-year American Community Survey Data sets indicating that these two census tracts had the lowest median household income (MHHI), highest unemployment rate and highest percentage of persons under the poverty line in 2015. Tracts in Chinatown had the lowest median household income of the entire island at an MHHI of \$23,000. However, Chinatown is among the existing centers for economic activity and development in the urban core of Honolulu which serves to create political pressure on policymakers to address existing homeless/ houseless population conditions. The infrastructure of Chinatown is well developed with multi-story commercial buildings, abundant transportation lines (bus and future rail area) and is within close proximity to predominantly multi-family housing. In contrast, Waianae is less developed with limited transportation accolades, a smaller commercial corridor, and is oriented towards agricultural land uses. Chinatown and Kaka’ako were chosen for this study as they have drawn media attention from police raids part of Honolulu Mayor’s “Compassionate Disruption” Initiative, a series of

ordinances aimed at forcibly moving large informal communities within Honolulu's commercial corridor to emergency shelters and transitional housing.

Surveys were conducted during daytime hours during January 2016 for a period of two to three days per area. Community observations were conducted in conjunction with survey days in an effort to identify and understand support systems of the various study areas. Social institutions and services such as outreach programs, missions, and individual personal support networks were also observed in order to better understand how those in poverty interact within their environment.

Surveys were conducted with adult heads of households in each of these areas to determine their demographic characteristics, understand their experiences within the homeless/ houseless community and to determine the role of shelter. Surveys were also used to determine how current government policies affect homeless/ houseless individuals. Of particular interest were policies regarding the Compassionate Disruption Initiative. Participants were selected using purposive sampling techniques. I was able to collect 68 surveys in total. Some personal interviews were conducted using semi structured questions following the survey. All interviews were recorded and transcribed line by line in accordance with IRB approval standards.

In addition to surveys and observational data collection, Census data provided by the US Census Bureau American Community Survey and "Point in Time Counts" provided by the Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness were used to assess homeless/ houseless clustering over time. This research attempted to monitor homeless clustering as it has progressed since 2010 to outline consistencies and peculiarities about homelessness and houselessness on Oahu. However, the data analysis will show how inconsistent data collection methods negatively impact accountability of the homeless population.

Limitations to Research

There were some limitation to research regarding data collection for spatial analysis and some limitations during the execution phase of survey collection. There was a substantial lack in data with Point-in Time (PIT) count datasets used in this study. Instead of being able to use five years worth of data to spatially analyze trends in homelessness, the researcher was able to use only three years. Inaccurate address location led to many data values that could not be used in the spatial analysis. In addition to spatial data, some respondents contradicted themselves in terms of demographic background during the survey data collection phase. Also during the survey data collection phase, I was unable to get an even amount of surveys within the rural homeless communities. I was able to get 19 completed surveys within the Waianae territory compared to 49 within the urban core of Honolulu.

During the survey data collection phase of this thesis, not all collection methods worked. While many homeless/ houseless individuals were approached, many refused to be surveyed. Collecting data throughout Kaka'ako and Chinatown proved difficult as some individuals interjected themselves into interviews they were not a

part of on more than one occasion. The person interjecting into the process attempted to undermine or threaten me if the survey did not end. To mitigate this issue in the future, researchers conducting field work should try to work in pairs, build trust with an insider, and/or request to work with a community development coordinator or other informant where possible.

Methodology

Data Collection

Outside of the literature review, I used multiple datasets aggregated from 1) Honolulu County Department of Human Services Point-in Time (PIT) counts and 2) Surveys.

Data collection for this project was collected in two phases. The first phase consisted of studying chronic homelessness trends within the downtown corridor through open source data. The data collected derives from the Department of Human Services (DHS) Point in Time (PIT) counts from 2012-2014. These data sets were used as they were the only sources that provided where homelessness was encountered during PIT survey collection. Survey teams listed where they encountered chronic homelessness and where interviews were conducted. Unfortunately, however, some locations recorded by survey teams were too vague to be used for tracking trends. For example data listed as “streets” or “under tree” lack specificity as to the area within Region 1 where the data were collected.

The points recorded by the survey teams were aggregated and put into Microsoft Excel Data sheets. Vague data was not used as part of the data set. The unused data totaled 91 people for 2012, 90 people for 2013, and 83 people for 2014 that could not be used. These losses represented almost a third of all persons recorded as chronically homeless in Region 1.

Per the research design, I conducted surveys during daytime hours over an eight day period from January 2, 2016 to January 10, 2016. Using purposive sampling techniques, five areas were surveyed across the island of Oahu with two survey areas representing rural homelessness and three survey areas representing urban core homelessness. The five areas surveyed were: Chinatown, Ala Wai Park, Kaka Ako, Nanakuli, and the Waianae Boat Harbor. I was unable to conduct surveys in transitional and emergency shelters due to violation of privacy concerns by shelter authorities and time constraints.

Community observations were conducted upon arrival into new survey areas for the first day only and only during daylight hours. The purpose of these observations was to identify and understand support systems of the various survey areas. Social institutions such as schools and cultural centers, and personal support networks were monitored to understand how those in poverty interact.

Surveys were conducted with adult heads of households in each of these areas to determine their demographic characteristics and to understand their experiences within the homeless/ houseless community. Due to restrictions in surveying transient shelters, the researcher was unable to determine if transient housing was permissive in community development and the ability of families to move out of poverty.

PIT Data Analysis

I used the PIT count data sets to conduct a spatial analysis of trends in chronic homelessness in the Western half of the Downtown Honolulu area. To analyze this data, I used the PIT Count Report from 2012-2014. These reports were the only reports (out of 5) that recorded the location of where surveys were taken. From these reports, I checked addresses using Google maps and recorded the latitude and longitude data into excel. These points were then exported to point shapefiles and intersected using the 2013 US Census TIGER Shapefiles from the US Census Bureau website. The following map depicts where homelessness has grown and decreased from 2012-2014.

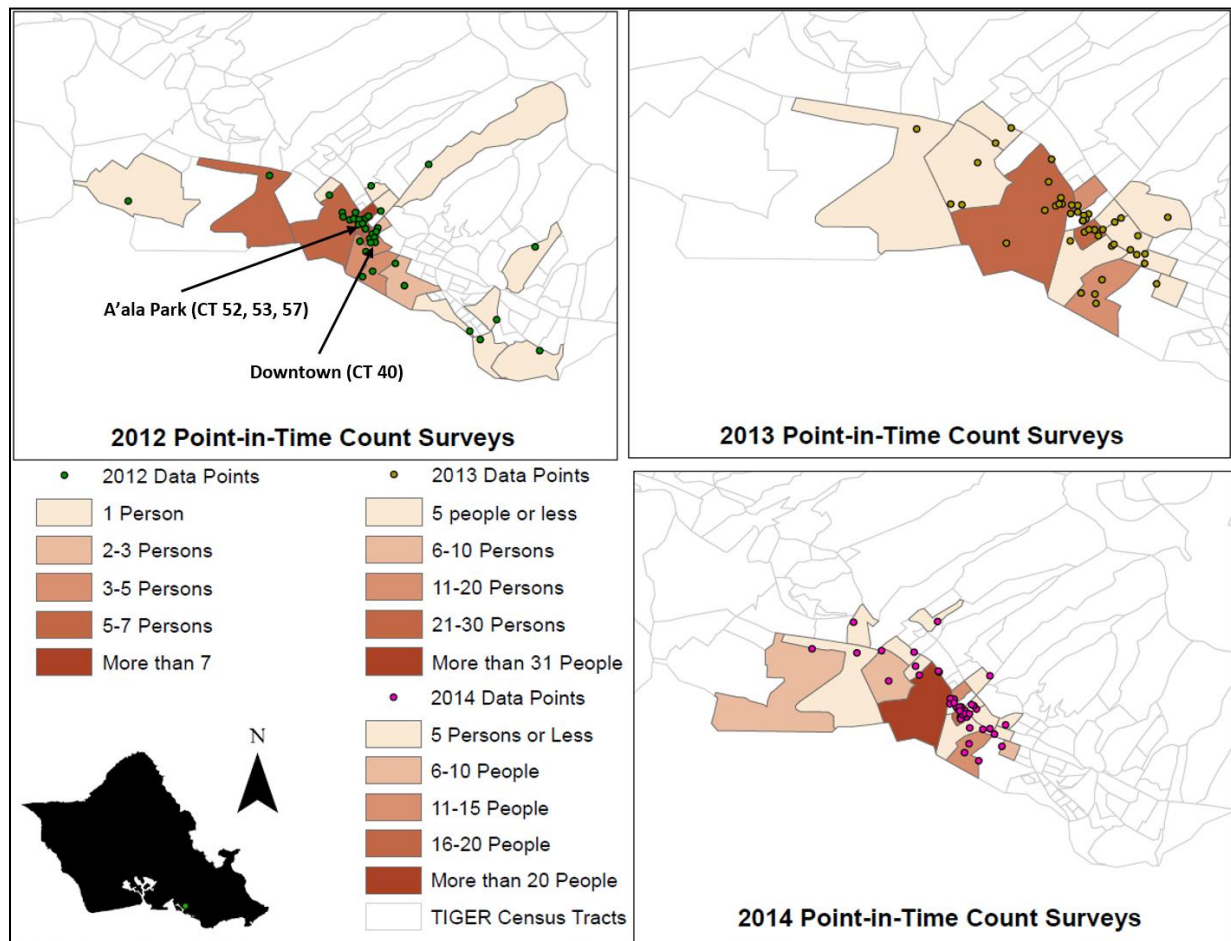


Figure 3: Point-in-Time Count Data normalized by census tract (Source: US Census Bureau and the Institute of Human Services (IHS) Point-in-Time Counts 2012-2014)

Of note, the census tracts with the highest recorded chronic homelessness were Census Tracts 40, 52, 53, and 57. For the purpose of this study tracts 52, 53, and 57 are referred to as “Chinatown” tracts. Census tract 40 represents downtown area of Western Honolulu which includes landmarks such as Fort Street Mall and Hawaii Pacific University. It is a large commercial area with many public institutions and numerous social services. The Chinatown tracts all surround A’ala Park.

From 2012 to 2013, the Chinatown tracts grew in chronic homelessness from 22 individuals surveyed to 75 individuals. In 2014 the number of chronic homeless decreased to 61 recorded individuals. In Census Tract 40, homelessness grew from 7 recorded individuals in 2012 to 22 individuals in 2013. Chronic homelessness decreased by 28% to 16 individuals

From these datasets, chronic homelessness grew significantly in all tracts from 2012 and 2013. However, it appears homelessness decreased in 2014 by roughly 20% in Chinatown and 30% in Downtown. The sudden spike in homelessness from 2012 to 2013 could be due to more resources and organization being involved in the survey process allowing for more surveys to be taken. Regardless, the data shows a significant and growing increase of chronic homelessness throughout the Downtown and Chinatown areas of Honolulu’s Commercial Business District. The results of this analysis aided the decision to conduct surveys.

Survey Analysis

Survey data was compiled into Microsoft Excel and broken down into seven separate worksheets. Five of those worksheets were based off each survey area where data was collected and the last section *Totals* served as an aggregated data set with all survey areas incorporated into one. An additional worksheet, *Rural vs. Urban* was used to aggregate data and compare and contrast rural and urban collected data. Sixty-eight surveys were conducted in total. Of the sixty-eight respondents, thirty-five respondents were male while thirty-three were female. All respondents spoke English as their primary language spoken at home. As previously mentioned, 19 surveys represent rural homelessness while 49 surveys represent the Urban Core dataset.

In terms of ethnicity, more than half of the respondents (thirty-five or 51.5%) were of Asian or Pacific Island descent. This Asian demographic was further broken down by asking respondents that answered “Asian or Pacific Islander” if they were of Hawaiian or Pacific Island descent of which twenty-two indicated they were. Thirty of the total respondents indicated they were Caucasian making them the second largest sample surveyed. Of those surveyed, only three respondents indicated being Hispanic.

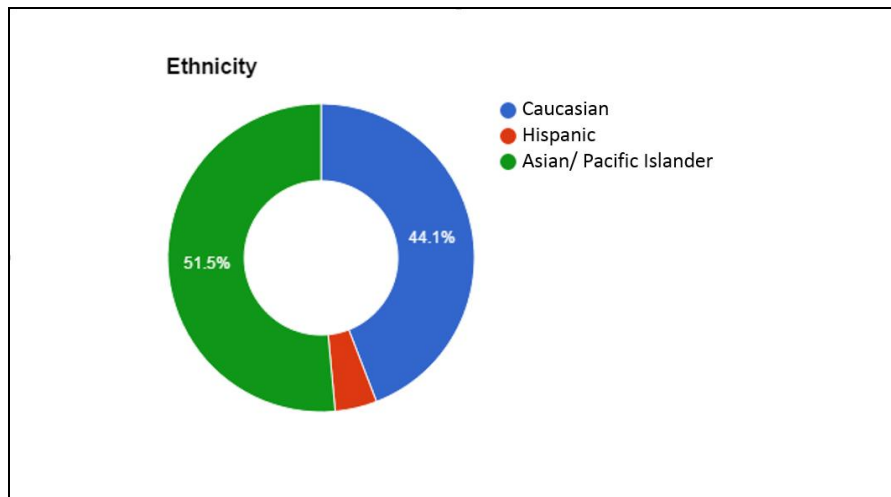


Figure 4: Ethnicity of the sample population

When asked if respondents were living alone, answers were roughly split between those that were and those that were not. Thirty-seven respondents indicated that they were not living alone. Out of all areas surveyed, the majority of Chinatown respondents indicated they were living alone (22 of 32 respondents). This data set indicates trends of group poverty rather than individual chronic homelessness or houselessness, however those experiencing chronic homelessness in the urban core were more likely to live alone than those living in rural areas. Twenty-nine respondents (42%) indicated that they were living alone. Two respondents declined to answer.

Those that indicated that they were not living alone were prone to living with their significant others. At 39%, this trend spread evenly across all study areas, but was more prevalent in rural areas. In some cases respondents from Waianae indicated that they were living with their significant other and another friend. Only one respondent from the Boat Harbor community indicated that they were living with their significant other and children. Within the urban core, three respondents indicated that they were living with children. These three respondents were found in Kaka'ako and all were from the Marshall Islands.

The majority of respondents that indicated they were not living alone were usually found living with only one other person. However, 21% of respondents indicated they were living with two people in their residence. Thirty percent of all respondents were found living with three or more people.

In terms of searching for available housing, the total number of respondents is split 50/50 between those that are actively seeking housing through various support networks and between those that have given up on looking for housing. Out of those that were actively seeking housing, eleven respondents (16% of the total) indicated they were currently using emergency shelters or transitional housing. In stark contrast, fifty-six respondents (82% of the total respondents) indicated they were not currently using shelters of any kind.

Employment and Supporting Services

Ninety-five percent of all respondents (64 in total) reported receiving federal program assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) also known as food stamps. Twenty-six percent of respondents (18 in total) reported receiving other federal program assistance. Twelve respondents reported using family based programs such as WIC and TANF which support homeless families with children. Twelve respondents also reported collecting unemployment and disability benefits to supplement income. Only two individuals reported collecting disability benefits. These two beneficiaries were veterans.

In terms of employment, 3% (2 respondents) mentioned being employed. With over half of those surveyed living with and supporting two or more persons, the fact that this sample is for the most part unemployed is alarming due to the number of households that are supporting children and families. However, when asked how they received income, the majority of respondents, fifty-seven in total (84%), said that they were supported through various social services and local organizations.



Figure 5: Employment Status of those surveyed

Amenities in each community

Survey respondents were asked which amenities were available to them while in their current location. Amenities included electricity, restrooms, schools, and transportation; while individual items included tents, sleeping, bags, and mattresses. Within the urban core, no respondents reported having electricity available to them. Chinatown respondents reported having showers and restrooms available to them within 800 meters, specifically from the River of Life Mission, a non-profit religious organization located 200 meters to the East of A'ala Park. Homeless individuals in Chinatown did not have tents for the most part. 5 out of the 32 individuals in this area reported having tents. Half of

the Chinatown respondents reported having a sleeping bag or mattress to sleep. The Kaka’ako community had few individual sleeping amenities with only 3 individuals reporting having a sleeping bag and 6 individuals having a mattress at least. Ala Wai homeless individuals reported having sleeping bags and tents with the majority (5 out of 7) having additional mattress pads.

Rural homeless communities were well established and had more amenities available to them than their urban counterparts. Within the boat harbor community, 4 respondents reported having generators that supplied electricity to their tents. All members of the boat harbor community had individual sleeping items and shelter. The Nanakuli community did not have showers available to them. However, public restrooms were available for use at a local drive-thru restaurant. Nanakuli respondents also reported being far from schools, but close to public transportation. Transportation was reported as being available to all communities.

There are numerous organizations that support both the boat harbor community and Nanakuli. Organizations supporting the locale of the rural communities included mobile health service teams from Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center (WCCHC). Waianae Community Outreach (WCO) is an additional community based outreach program that provides comprehensive services to individuals and families in need. The agency relies on public support in order to provide outreach services such as case management food and service support, clothing donations, and other functions. According to the locals within the Boat Harbor community and Nanakuli, WCO operates twice a month providing donations and hot meals to those in need.

In addition to medical services, the boat harbor community has an agreement with the Waianae Boat Harbor Master to use water sources for basic needs and sustenance. The boat harbor community leadership also coordinates trash disposal services on a bi-weekly basis to keep the community clean.

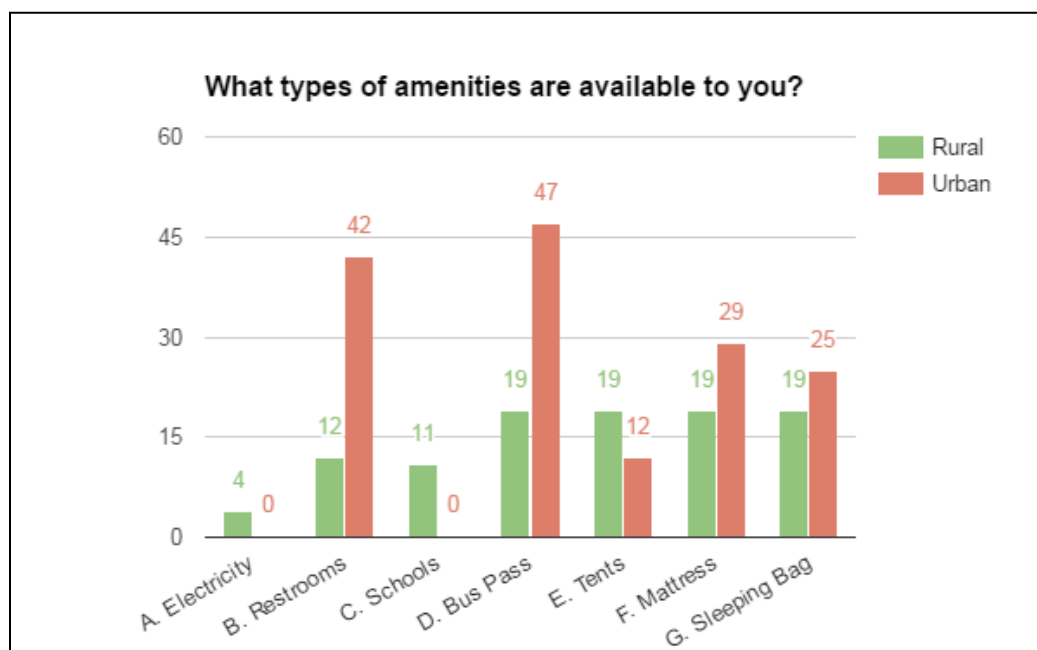


Figure 6: Available Amenities in the Urban and Rural Population Sample

Emergency Shelter Use and Transitional Housing

Those living in the Urban Core were prone to using emergency shelters and transitional housing more than those established in rural communities. No respondents within the rural communities reported being in or using an emergency shelter at the time the survey took place. In contrast, eleven respondents from Chinatown reported using emergency shelters at the time the survey was taken. One respondent reported being a first time user of the emergency shelter. Those individuals using emergency shelters used them at night on a first come first serve basis. No respondents reported being in a transitional housing program.

When asked if they had ever used an emergency shelter or transitional housing, 81% (56 in total) of respondents reported using an emergency or transitional housing program prior to living in their current location. Sixty-eight percent (13 of 19 total) individuals living in rural communities reported using emergency shelters. In contrast, 87% or 43 of 49 total respondents in the urban core reported using emergency shelters. All members of the Kaka'ako community reported using emergency shelters prior to being surveyed. Five out of seven respondents from the Ala Wai community reported using shelters prior to being surveyed as well.

The duration of use for both emergency shelters and transitional housing varied amongst the rural and urban homeless populations surveyed. Within the rural communities 10 (52%) respondents reported using shelters for over three months. In contrast, twenty-eight respondents from the urban core reported using emergency shelters or transitional housing programs for over six months. Only one individual reported using a transitional housing program, but was unable to complete the program due to alcohol dependency and relapse.

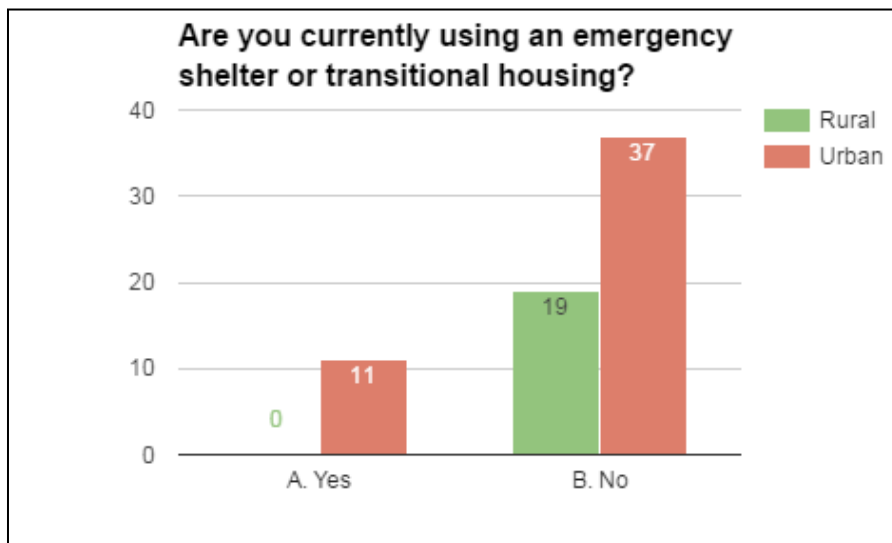


Figure 7: Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing Use

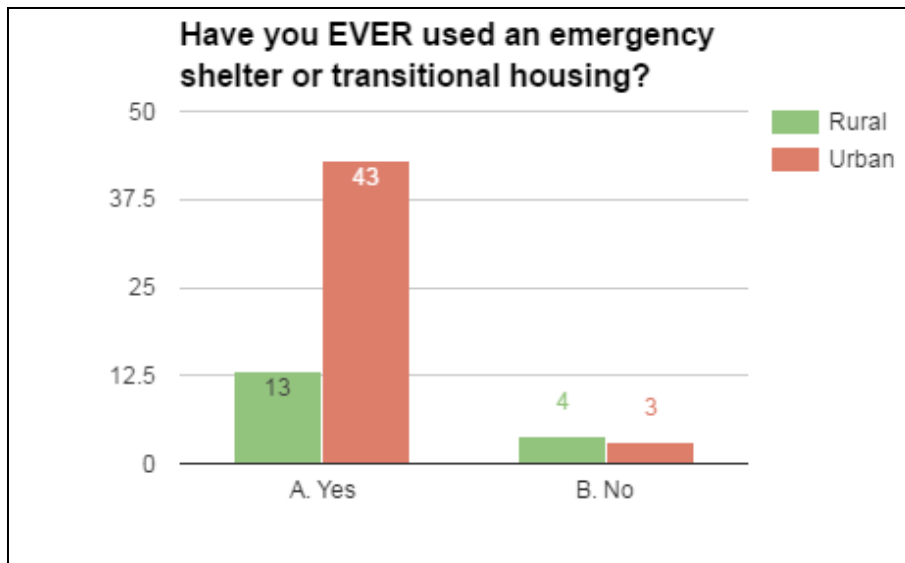


Figure 8: Number of participants that have used emergency shelters or transitional housing in their lifetime

In follow up interviews, many survey respondents did not favor using emergency shelters or transitional housing programs. One male respondent reported that the emergency shelters are poorly advertised and that they have bed bugs. He also said that the showers are crowded and disgusting. Despite his overall negative review, he did mention that the food is readily available and that churches provide mobile services with donations and small gatherings for prayer. A female survey respondent reported that her and her husband stayed in a transitional shelter, but they did not like it. She said that the program was mismanaged and frequently changed their rules policies making it difficult to stay.

Current Disposition

The majority of those individuals and families that were surveyed during this project have been living without housing between six months and two years. Within the urban core, 17 individuals stated that they had been without housing between seven months and one year. Sixteen individuals within the urban core stated that they had been without housing for over a year, but less than two years. The majority of those persons experiencing rural homelessness had been without housing for more than two years. Eight persons claimed that they had been living in the Boat Harbor for over two years, while 3 stated that they had been without housing longer than one year. Ranges for those living in Nanakuli without housing were split between seven months and just less than two years.

When asked how long individuals were homeless in their current location 86% (58 persons) reported they had been homeless in their current location for over seven months. Eighteen of those individuals staying in Chinatown reported being there for seven months, but less than one year. Twelve individuals stated that they had

been staying in A'ala Park for over a year. Those living within Ala Wai Park and Kaka'ako also reported staying in their current locations for over seven months. Those individuals staying in the Boat Harbor and Nanakuli reported living in their current locations for over a year. During interviews, most of the boat harbor community members reported living in the harbor for over three years.

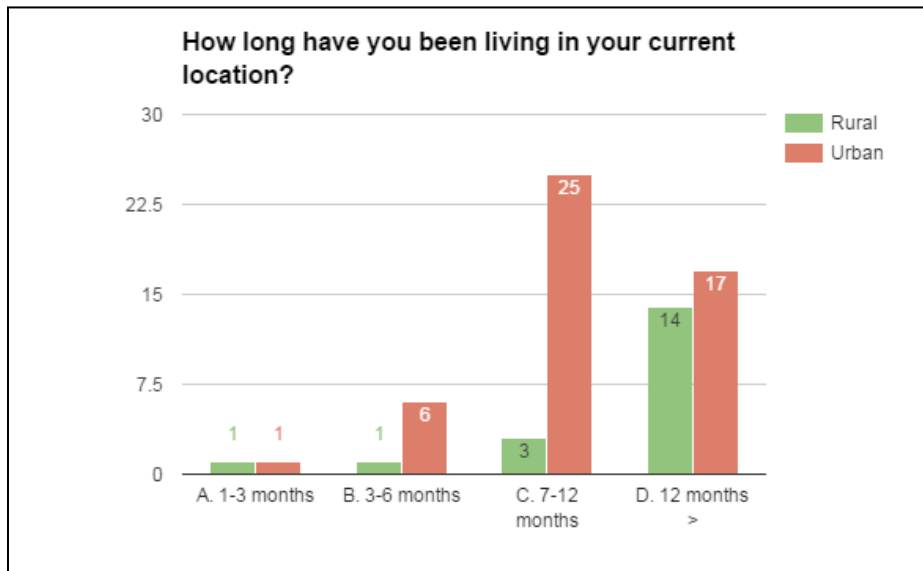


Figure 9: Duration in current residence

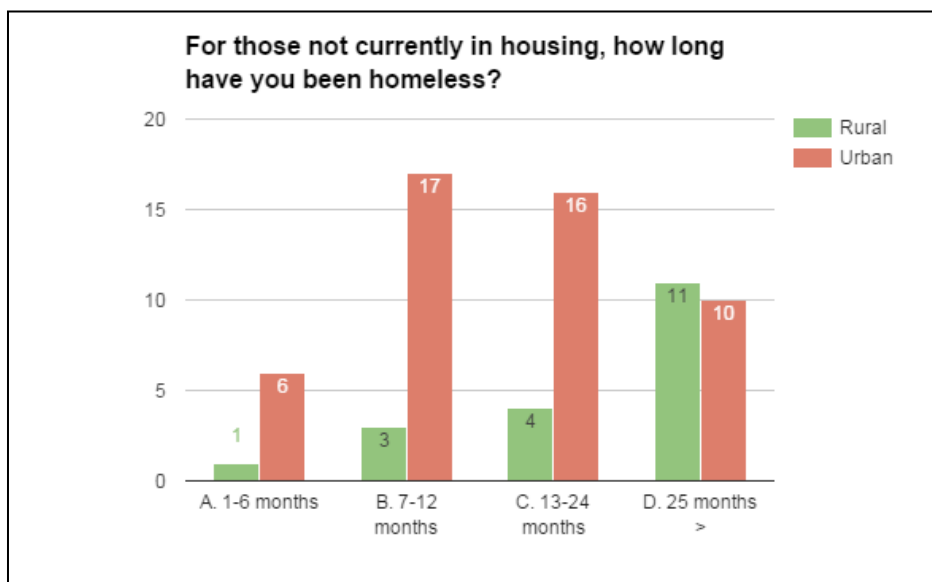


Figure 10: Duration Homeless

Police Raids and Sit-Lie Policies

City policies such as Mayor Caldwell's Compassionate Disruption Initiative target homeless individuals and families within the urban core of Honolulu. Survey respondents were asked if the police had ever forced them to leave an area that they were occupying. Within the urban core, 100% of respondents reported being forced to leave an area where they were squatting. Less than half (9 respondents) from rural homeless communities also reported being removed from parks by the police; however respondents from rural areas mentioned it was not common and less frequent. In contrast, respondents from the urban core reported being forced to leave areas they were occupying everyday within a one year time-frame. The daily occurrence of individuals being removed from parks in the urban core is indicative of the inability to organize themselves. Without a reliable and safe place to seek shelter, many are left roaming and insecure throughout the day until night falls and they can resettle into their tents.

In addition to being removed by police many respondents experiencing urban homelessness reported receiving citations for occupying various parks. In Chinatown, 28% (9 respondents) of those surveyed reported receiving tickets. In Kaka'ako, 8 of the 10 respondents reported receiving citations for occupying the park after hours or refusing to leave. To exacerbate the issue further, 7 of the 10 respondents in Kaka'ako had personal items confiscated by police. Those items confiscated included identification, prescription medications, tents, sleeping bags, supplies, and other items (collected recyclables, clothing items, and other livelihood items). The majority of respondents (60%) from both urban and rural homeless communities also reported that the local police department made no effort in assisting them or referring them to social services or any type of emergency shelter after removing them from areas they were occupying.

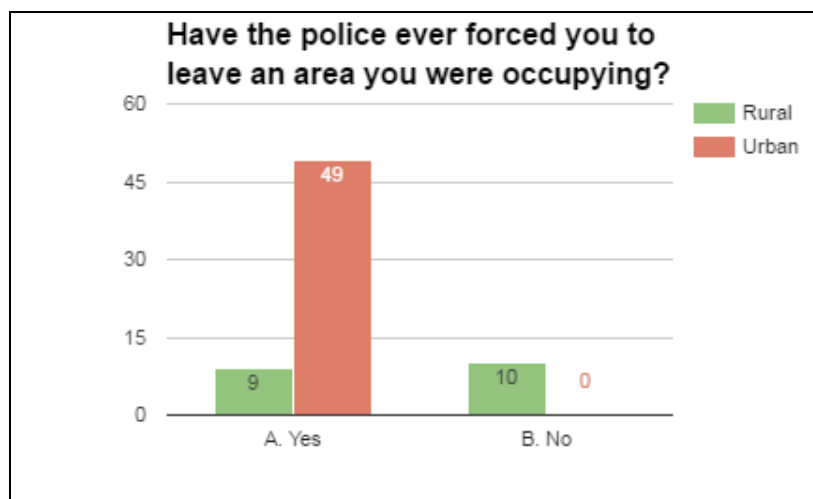


Figure 11: Effects of Sit-Lie Laws



Figure 12: Citations and the effects of Sit-Lie Laws

The Compassionate Disruption Initiative is meant to keep Honolulu attractive to the public and maintain its status as a world class destination. According to William Aila, “Tourism to Honolulu is one of, if not the largest, economic driver for the state.” With this reasoning, it would not be in the state’s best interest to allow visible poverty to spread throughout the commercial corridor of Hawaii. However, these sit-lie policies have had a negative effect on the urban homeless population. It is difficult to overcome homelessness when being forced to constantly move from place to place and in some cases lose important property due to police raids.

Some say that this intervention has played an important role. In an interview with Shrevelle Gardner at the River of Life Mission, she stated:

“I think (the police raids and policies) helped the chosen few that wanted to get into housing that didn’t want to deal with the sweeps. But on the other side, as a local, if they are going to be homeless they need to pick up their trash and clean up after themselves. I think that’s one of the biggest problems in that community. They are down there and dumping crates and crates of rubbish. When I was camping with my family, we always policed ourselves. In some ways, I’m glad the police are going down there. There are rodents. There are rats.”

Waianae Boat Harbor: A Model for Transitional Shelters?

The overall disposition of people living in the Boat Harbor is that “We are not homeless. We are houseless and life is good out here”. The Waianae homeless are well organized with strong social and support networks. These

relationships take time and can be difficult to establish. However, once established they can prove to benefit both the state and tenants that use the land.

Homeless locals have used the Waianae Boat Harbor for many years. According to William Aila, the Deputy Director of Hawaiian Homelands (DHHL), the area shifted from “chaos to compromise”. Prior to becoming well established, the homeless community within the boat harbor occupied the Waianae District Park that was co-located with the commercial harbor. The homeless community consistently left the area in disarray, littering the park and polluting the waters of Pokai Bay. The Neighborhood Board convened and reported their complaints to the chairman and County of Honolulu. The Homeless were evicted from the harbor soon after. After the initial eviction, homeless individuals and families began coming back to the park. They had nowhere else to go.

In 2007, William Aila, who was the Harbormaster at the time, met with Rose Loke Chung-Lono (aka Auntie Loke) and Twinkle Borge (aka Auntie Twinkles). Auntie Loke and Auntie Twinkles were two of the residents previously evicted and wished to make a compromise to stay at the harbor again. The two were granted that opportunity under the conditions that they removed and managed the removal of all waste in the future; and the encampment could not exceed 300.

Since 2007, Auntie Loke and Twinkles have organized and maintained the site providing a place for 268 residents to call home. They are able to maintain order in this site by vetting those that want to come in and empowering and delegating leadership from within the community. The site has been divided into numerous sections with an area “captain” responsible for the order and enforcement of each area. The most important rules are to keep the area clean and preserve the basin. Outside of those two rules, meals are organized and the community is involved in all affairs.

As illustrated in the analysis section of this thesis, the Boat Harbor community has many available amenities which include showers and bathrooms. These amenities cost nothing to the state and work in concert through coordination with private entities. According to William Aila, “The water and toilets are provided through commercial fees that boaters pay to use the harbor. These boaters are aware of the homeless community in Waianae. Other than that, the management of the area doesn't cost anything.” Another benefit of the Boat Harbor is that it provides an opportunity for mobility. The area is close to transportation which is helpful in getting children to schools and for getting into areas for commerce.

Within the Boat Harbor, tents and living spaces are built on small plots of that vary from 1500 to 3600 square feet (less than .25 acres) that are smoothed out by hand. Most plots have a small wall to mark personal plots. The walls are constructed out of different materials ranging from wooden crates, large stones, or repurposed steel fencing. The tents are of various brands and size. One tenant had a military grade Command Post tent while others had multi-person tents and tarps for shelter. Some residents also set up gardens.



Figure 13: Aerial view of the Waianae Boat Harbor Campsite (Source: Business Insider)

In addition to keeping the area organized, the management coordinated additional services for waste disposal and has coordinated with numerous nonprofit organizations to assist in the welfare of the community. These organizations include Waianae Community Outreach, and the Leeward District Service Offices which have had a substantial impact in supporting the homeless and houseless community by providing mobile health services and donation services.

Comparing Urban and Rural Homeless Communities

After numerous surveys and interviews, I found that: safety, partnerships with supporting agencies and access to shelter play the largest roles in the quality of life for the homeless.

Safety

During field observations, an elderly male between the ages of 50 and 60 was sitting on a stone planter. He had a shopping cart with him and was wearing a backpack. I assumed he was homeless. As he was sitting, a younger male (between 25-30 years of age) approached him on a bicycle. This younger male, appeared to be homeless as well and was carrying recyclables in the basket on the front of his bicycle. The elderly male was looking for something in his backpack and wasn't paying attention to the younger person on the bike. While he wasn't paying attention, the younger person on the bike took a backpack off of the top of the elderly man's shopping cart. He immediately departed on the bike when the elderly man looked up and saw what had happened.

Tales such as this are common amongst the locals in A'ala Park and in Kokako. During interviews with the homeless many respondents brought up the theme of safety. Within the urban core, many people do not feel safe unless they are with people they know.

"A lot of people sleep in the park, but the cops come here at 5 in the morning blaring their lights and sirens and tell everybody to move out. So a lot of people sleep here and then pack all their stuff and leave. They come back after the cops leave and that's the way it goes. It happens every day. I've gotten like 8 citations for being in the park after hours or pissing in the park. The tickets don't really do anything- they pretty much don't mean shit. There are a lot of bad people around here that the cops could better use their time for."

A lot of people out here are thieves. People steal things when you're asleep or will rob you in daylight. I've lost a lot of personal item from robberies like my medication and medical paperwork and my bus pass. My food stamps were stolen. You have to have friends and be with people you can trust, but it's hard."

-Male, Chinatown

In contrast, the boat harbor community has established rules and order. They enforce their own and provide their own security measures. Within the camp, area captains handle discrepancies between tenants and protect their campsites from unwelcomed visitors. The Boat Harbor has established roles and responsibilities delegated for section leaders. To enforce rules within the community, they have an organized and respected security team that looks out for the safety and general welfare of the people.

Safety from others is not the sole concern. Safety in terms of health is also an ongoing area of concern for those living in poverty. The homeless within the urban core are often affiliated with the topic of trash and uncleanliness. Many local residents and tourists have spoken against allowing homeless to congregate in parks especially in Kaka'ako due to the amount of garbage and litter left behind. Each park has trash cans available, yet trash can be found scattered throughout grassy areas, in water buffer areas, and throughout the park where people congregate. Trash and waste attracts vermin and insects to these sites which can spread sickness through bites and fecal matter. Sickness due to accruing garbage can lead to hospital visits that Hawaii taxpayers will be forced to pay for. Excessive garbage also puts children and other family members at unnecessary risk to sickness. Parks within the urban core of Honolulu are meant for the enjoyment of all residents and visitors.

The Boat Harbor community, in contrast, has overcome this obstacle through self sufficiency and coordination with outside support. As part of their agreement with the Department of Hawaiian Homelands, the Boat Harbor must ensure no litter accrues within their site. Waste disposal is coordinated through Auntie Twinkles and Auntie Loke twice weekly. Trash is collected through informal means consisting of an open bed truck. Members of the community cycle through turns of trash collection and drop off. Recyclables are also collected and taken to the redemption center. The money collected from these trips is used for food and supplies for their community.

Partnerships with Supporting Agencies

In terms of amenities, the chronic homeless are at the epicenter of social services within Honolulu. However, many are unable to settle due to constant raids and the possibility of having their belongings confiscated. The boat harbor residents, in contrast, are assigned designated areas for privacy, are able to set up livable conditions, and have services that support their daily lives with minimal discomfort. For the Boat Harbor, the opportunity to become a well established community can only be attributed to the relationship they established with supporting agencies.

The Department of Hawaiian Homelands is instrumental in keeping the Boat Harbor community where it is. According to William Aila, there is "opposition" to this community staying at the Boat Harbor. State representatives would like to see the Boat Harbor community gone and the lands converted into a park. However, the houseless community in the Boat Harbor provides an environmental protection service that prevents people from endangering the Opae Ula Brackish Water Shrimp and they manage the land through waste management services as previously mentioned.



Figure 14: Tents and litter in Kaka'ako Community Park (Source: Honolulu Star Advertiser)

Access to Shelter

In terms of housing, there is no inventory to support affordable housing initiatives for the homeless. Shelters, as examined through this thesis, provide less than ideal conditions for those experiencing homelessness to thrive in. That is not to say that they fail to support the homeless. However, the transient and limited nature of such shelters limits the ability of homeless individuals to establish communities and conditions that allow them to recover. Earlier in this study, I mentioned that homeless shelters are not used to capacity. This means that those persons that live on the street make a choice to do so. Making that choice, however, limits their pathways to housing by minimizing opportunities to interact with social services and other organizations that can assist in entering the transitional housing process.

The Boat Harbor community has shown that a self governing model can create conditions that are both comfortable and mutually beneficial to the surrounding environment. However, if this community grows then their relationship that keeps them tied to these lands becomes stressed and they may find themselves unable to settle in one area due to police sweeps or other factors. The issue isn't that the Boat Harbor community exists; it is the fact

that they will not seek real housing options because they are comfortable. They may waste their opportunity for real housing by not actively seeking assistance.

Policy Recommendations and Conclusion

The Department of Human Services (DHS), Homeless Programs Office is the agency charged with the organization, coordination, and execution of Honolulu's Homeless Point-in-Time (PIT) count. DHS utilizes the Honolulu Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH) as the primary office of responsibility for the PIT. Data is collected and reported once every year. However, there is a lack of specificity in where homelessness is encountered and recorded during the PIT count.

In order to extrapolate where homelessness is increasing or decreasing, the methodology in how data is recorded should be revised. For example, when reviewing the 2012 PIT appendix, many areas where chronic homelessness was counted are extremely vague. Terms like "car" or "beach" are used to identify locations where chronic homelessness was recorded. I excluded vague data from the 2012 PIT counts recorded within Appendix 4: Chronic Homeless Cross Tabulation by region. The original report recorded 158 total chronically homeless persons. I reduced this number to 63 persons after discarding vague data. In addition to the lack of spatial specificity, the 2012 interviews did not question the duration of homelessness/ houselessness of those surveyed. The duration was limited to a one year or more; or less than a year standard timeframe of homelessness.

Recording with GPS is a reasonable alternative to the ambiguity of the current standard. Doing so, would allow future researchers and social workers to analyze trends in where homeless/ houseless persons congregate. This also ensures that all people can be accurately accounted for and avoids potential inflation of reports. The data gathered from these sites could also be used for vagrancy enforcement and support services. One drawback to doing this is the possibility of violating the confidentiality of those surveyed. Homeless individuals may not want the attention of social services or law enforcement personnel patrolling into their personal spaces as a result of the survey data gathered.

The 2013 PIT report recommended that:

"Effectively adding zip code locations to outreach encounter surveys in the future could enable GIS reporting and analysis by legislative district, which many appear to be interested in. This could aid in more effectively targeting outreach resources and providing services to the chronically homeless."

To add to the above statement, GIS and HMIS datasets should be analyzed by planners in order to fill in gaps of frequency and identity of homeless individuals and families that may have a tendency to relapse into homelessness after using shelters.

A fundamental comprehensive look at land use within the commercial corridor would be beneficial as well. Analysis and comparison of current growth against projected growth and zoning could benefit key leadership within the County of Honolulu. Potentially rezoning areas throughout Chinatown and Kaka'ako and creating private public partnerships to enable private investment into these public areas may be beneficial in pushing the homeless out of these areas and improving the quality of life to the public while forcing the homeless to use emergency shelters or at a minimum register with social services.

An alternative to pushing out the homeless would be to have safe havens established where the homeless can govern themselves but minimize their impact to the general public's right to public spaces. Safe zones and containment areas where the homeless can congregate should be researched more. These safe zones should be limited in size and designed not to exceed prescribed thresholds so that order and the quality of life can be maintained. Transitional housing efforts should be sustained in concert with safe zone use.

Future studies should experiment with community development initiatives or grass roots community initiatives that benefit the homeless and those external agencies that support them.

Future studies should measure performance of state care for the homeless populations. With the majority of services located in the downtown area, yet the quality of life for those that are chronically homeless low, future studies should spatially analyze the quality of life of the homeless using those services. In addition to this, approaches in managing the chronically homeless that are using emergency shelters and transitional housing services should also be evaluated using quality of life indicators.

Future studies should also look into alternatives of affordable housing. One solution could be safe havens that consist of tents and mobile homes. Doing this could provide both mobility and service support to homeless individuals and families. This mix would consist of households with 0-30% AMI, or households that are unlikely able to afford a home.

The Waianae Boat Harbor community demonstrates the possibility that given the opportunity, a thriving and organized living space can prevail without impeding on the public. The state should revise their sit-lie policies and establish safe havens that follow similar rules and agreements that the Boat Harbor has made with the Department of Hawaiian Homelands. . More importantly, the homeless from within the urban core should be empowered by taking responsibility over the lands they occupy; establishing leadership, and establishing a code of ethics that can be both enforced and respectfully followed.

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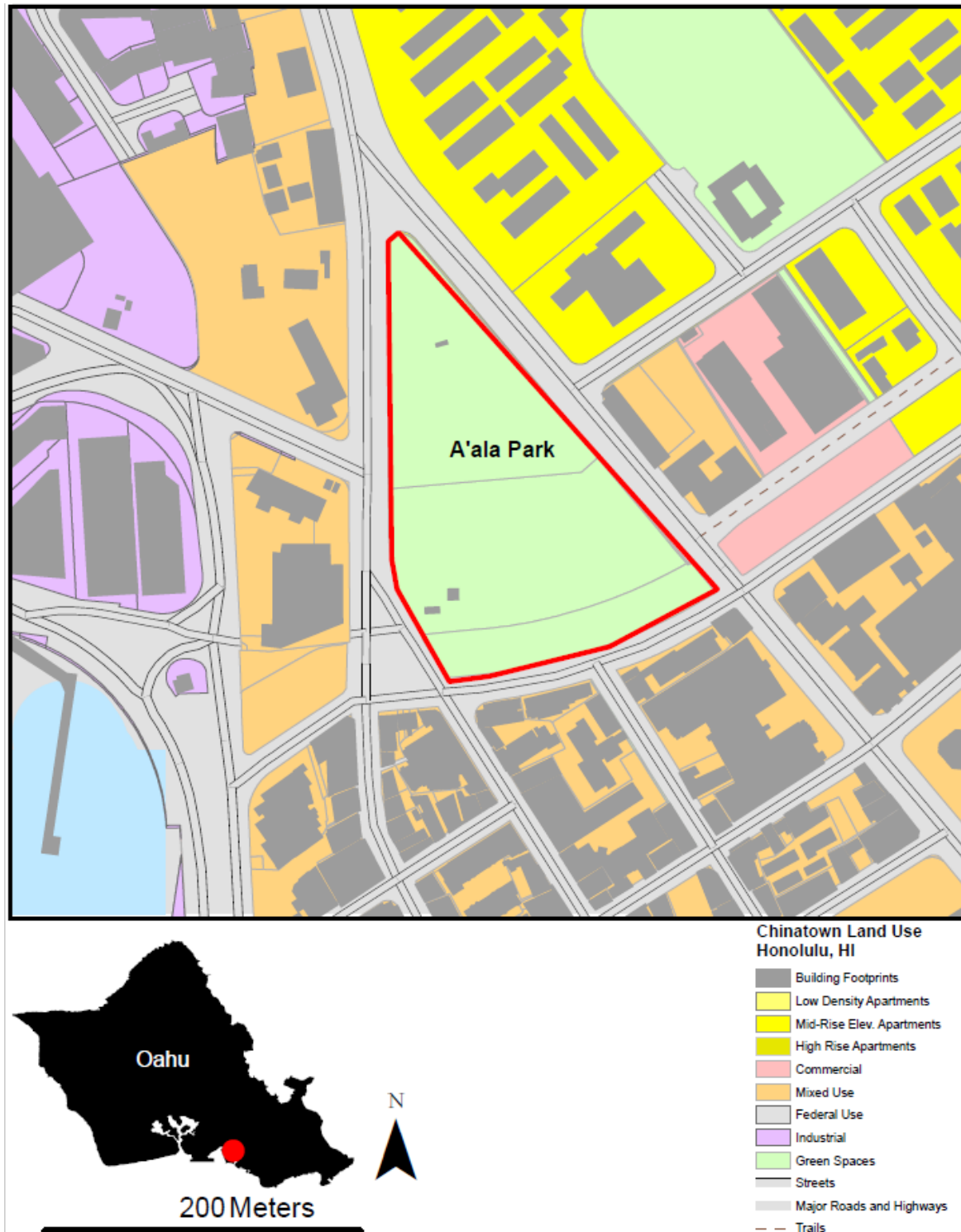
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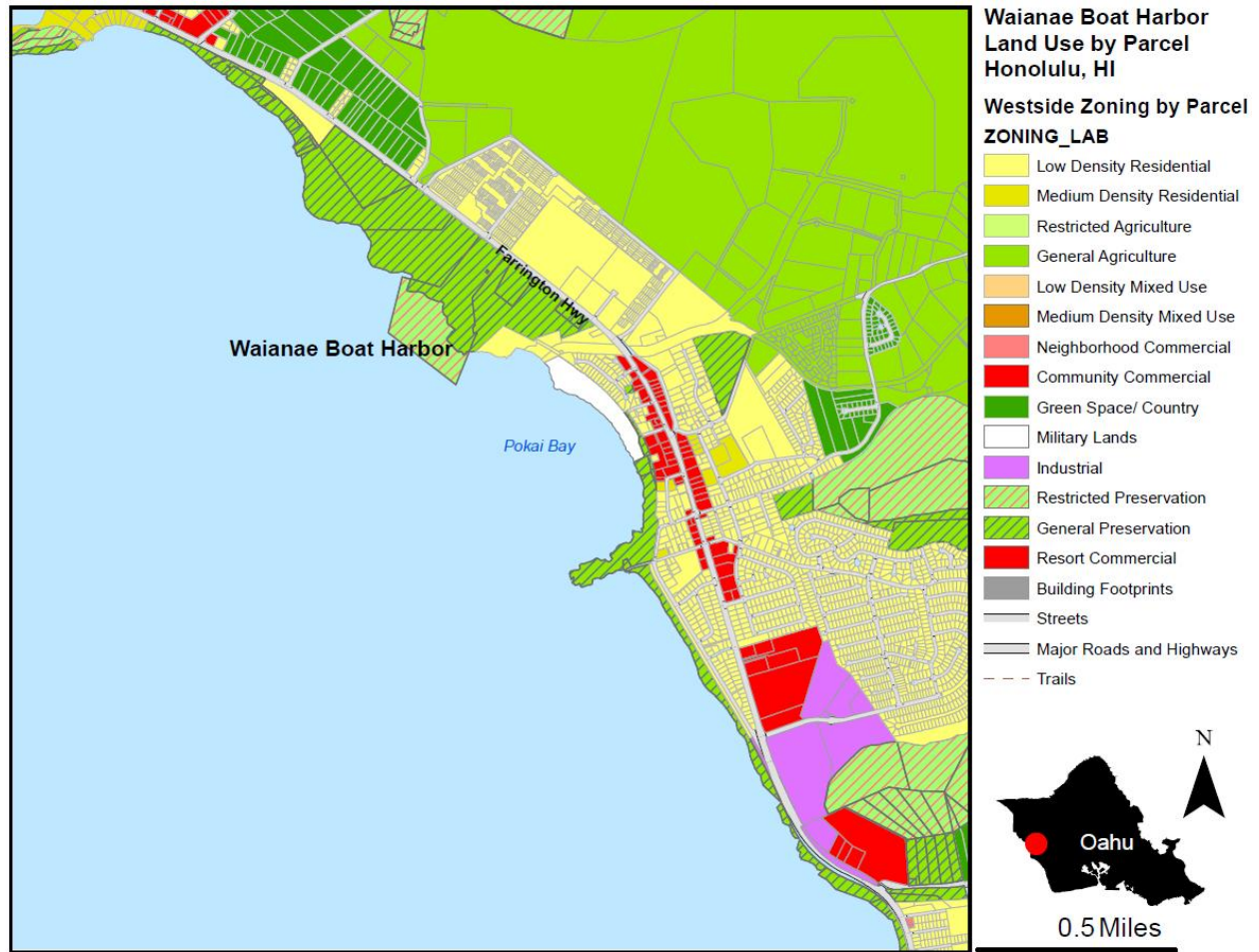
Appendix A. PIT Exclusion Data

PIT Exclusion Data		
2012 Exclusions		
Location	Number of Homeless	Total
Outside	39	95
Streets	35	
Unknown Location	14	
Van	3	
Iwilei St	1	
King St.	3	
2013 Exclusions	Number of Homeless	Total
Honolulu	46	90
Honolulu Streets	6	
In a tent	1	
Outside	1	
Park	13	
Streets	6	
Under bridge	5	
Unknown Location	12	
2014 Exclusions	Number of Homeless	Total
Alley in Honolulu	1	88
Beach	4	
Camp	1	
Honolulu Streets	6	
Mortuary	1	
Park	9	
Sidewalk	6	
Streets	50	
Tent	1	
Town area	2	
Under bridge	1	
Under tree	1	
Gas Station	1	
Kukui St	1	
Nuuanu	1	
Punchbowl	1	
S. King st	1	
Ward Ave	1	

Appendix B. Zoning and Land Use Chinatown



Appendix C. Zoning and Land Use Waianae



Appendix D. Survey

Informed Consent and Agreement to Participate in Research.

Responsible Investigator: Dr. Clara Irazabal

Primary Investigator: Aaron Febuary, GSAPP M.S.U.P. Candidate, Columbia University

Title of Protocol: Tent Cities: A Study of Oahu's Squatter Settlements

1. You have been asked to participate in the research study that aims at investigating a) the perception of the tent and informal structure living beach community residents of Waianae, Chinatown, and Sand Island concerning the availability of affordable housing and b) the resident's current means of shelter.
2. By signing this document you agree to take the attached survey.
3. Completing the survey involves no risk to you.
4. You and the other residents will benefit if this research is used by the County of Honolulu or State of Hawaii to find ways to enhance the quality of life for its residents.
5. Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included.
6. Questions about this research may be addressed to Aaron Febuary, (407) 970-6111. Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Clara Irazabal, Thesis Advisor, Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (212) 854- 3414. Questions about subjects rights or research related injury may be presented to Gloria Gaines, Manager, Human Research Protection Office (212) 851-7043
7. No services of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose to "not participate" in the study.
8. Your consent is given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the survey. If you decide to participate in the survey, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with Columbia University or with any other participating institutions or agencies.
9. You will receive a copy of this letter for your records.

Do you consent to this survey?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Please sign or initial here _____

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Aaron Febuary

M.S.U.P. Candidate

Columbia University

Disclaimer to all Participants:

This study is being conducted by Graduate Students from Columbia University. The purpose of this study is to assess differences between rural and urban informal communities and to examine the causes of homelessness and actions that those living without a home take in order to find housing. Participation in this survey and subsequent interview is entirely voluntary. Thank you for your support and participation.

Directions:

This survey consists of three sections with an optional interview proceeding. Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge. Please inform the interviewer if you do not wish to continue.

1. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other

2. What is your ethnicity?
 - a. Caucasian
 - b. Hispanic
 - c. African American
 - d. Asian Pacific Islander
 - e. Other _____

3. If you marked "Asian, Pacific Islander" on the previous question, are you of Hawaiian or Polynesian descent?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

4. What is the primary language spoken in your home?
 - a. English
 - b. Spanish
 - c. Asiatic/ Polynesian Language
 - d. Other_____

5. Are you living alone?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

6. If you're living with somebody, who are you living with?
 - a. Significant Other/ Wife
 - b. Family member
 - c. Friend/ Acquaintance

- d. Children
- 7. How many people are you currently living with?
 - a. Alone
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4 or more
- 8. Have you sought assistance in finding affordable housing
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 9. What type of organization have you sought assistance from?
 - a. Religious institution
 - b. Social Services
 - c. Non-Profit Organization
 - d. Other (Please List)_____
- 10. Are you currently employed?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 11. Are you a veteran?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 12. Are you currently staying in transitional housing or an emergency shelter?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 13. If you are currently in transitional housing or an emergency shelter, is this your first time?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 14. If you are currently in transitional housing or an emergency shelter, how long have you been using these facilities?
 - a. Less than one month
 - b. 1-3 months
 - c. 3-6 months
 - d. More than 6 months
- 15. How did you find out about this transitional housing program or emergency shelter?
 - a. Friend or relative
 - b. Internet or newspaper search

- c. Police recommendation
- d. Social services
- e. Other (Please List)_____

16. IF you do not currently have housing, how long have you been homeless/ houseless

- a. 1-6 months
- b. 7-12 months
- c. 13-24 months
- d. 25 months or greater

17. IF you do not currently have housing, how long have you been living in your current residence?

- a. 1-3 months
- b. 4--6 months
- c. 7- 12 months
- d. Longer than 12 months

18. IF you do not currently have housing, what amenities and utilities are available to you? (Circle all that apply)

- a. Electricity
- b. Showers and Restroom facilities
- c. Schools
- d. Transportation
- e. Tent
- f. Mattress/ Sleeping Pad
- g. Sleeping bag

19. IF you do not currently have housing, have the police ever forced you to leave an area that you were occupying?

- a. Yes
- b. No

20. Have you ever received a citation (fine) or serve a jail sentence as a result of a police raid on your encampment in a public place?

- a. Yes
- b. No

21. IF you were forced to leave an area you were occupying as a result of a police raid, did they assist you in finding transitional housing or an emergency shelter?

- a. Yes
- b. No

22. IF you were forced to leave an area you were occupying as a result of a police raid, were you assigned any social services support?

- a. Yes
- b. No

23. How many times have the police forced you move from an area you were occupying?
- a. Only once
 - b. 2-3 times
 - c. More than 3 times
24. Was any of your property confiscated by the police as a result of a police raid?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
25. IF you DID lose property, what did you lose? Mark all that apply.
- a. Identification
 - b. Medications
 - c. Tent
 - d. Sleeping Bag or Comfort items
 - e. Food/ Water
 - f. Supplies
 - g. Other Personal Items
26. Were you able to recover those items from the police department?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
27. Are you getting assistance from any individuals or organizations assisting in this area/ community?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
28. IF you are receiving any state or federal benefits, what types of benefits are you receiving?
- a. SNAP (food stamps)
 - b. WIC (if it is a woman or child)
 - c. TANF (welfare)
 - d. Social Security or disability benefits
 - e. General assistance
 - f. Unemployment insurance (unemployment)
 - g. Others (Please List) _____
29. Have you ever used any of the Hawaii States or Honolulu County's Social Service Programs?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
30. Do you currently have a caseworker assigned?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

31. IF you currently awaiting affordable housing, how long have you been waiting for housing?
- a. Less than 3 months
 - b. 3-6 months
 - c. 6 months to 1 year
 - d. More than 1 year

Thank you for your participation.