

Hawaii News from the Honolulu Star-Advertiser - The homeless need money, advocates say - Hawaii News - Honolulu Star-Advertiser

StarAdvertiser.com

The homeless need money, advocates say

"Shallow subsidies" would allow many people living on the street to rent housing, the city is told

By [Gordon Y.K. Pang](#)

POSTED: 1:30 a.m. HST, Jun 15, 2015

LAST UPDATED: 2:36 a.m. HST, Jun 15, 2015

Mayor Kirk Caldwell and the Hono-lulu City Council should consider providing "shallow subsidies" to homeless families and individuals who simply need a few hundred dollars more a month to be able to put a roof over their heads, the leaders of two advocacy groups say.

The two groups also question the viability of both Caldwell's plan to provide a temporary homeless shelter at Sand Island and proposals by Council members to expand the city's existing sit-lie ordinance to new areas of Oahu and related legislation designed to force the homeless off sidewalks.

A 16-month survey shows that out of 3,393 homeless households, 25.3 percent indicated that they simply need financial help to move out of homelessness and don't require intensive case management or other supportive services, said Scott Mori-shige, project manager for PHOCUSED, Protecting Hawaii's Ohana, Children, Under-Served, Elderly and Disabled.

Of the 368 families surveyed, 52.7 percent said they required only financial subsidies, Mori-shige said.

"They really just need housing to be more affordable; they don't necessarily require case management or social services."



COURTESY J. LEE

Jenny Lee:

The policy director for Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice supports shallow subsidies as a more effective and cost-efficient use of government money, over the mayor's plan to open another emergency shelter

Bruce Asato / Nov. 14 A number of homeless campers lost possessions in the sweep of homeless tents from the

Shallow subsidies are typically aimed at those who already are employed or otherwise have a stable source of regular, monthly income, Mori-shige said.

"It's worked in high-cost markets such as San Francisco," he said. "They just need a little bit extra to bridge into rental housing and be able to maintain it."

Many of the homeless who have been gathering in Kaka-ako and beside the Kapa-lama Canal easily would fit that description, Mori-shige said.

"The affordability factor is their main barrier," he said.

He said a separate study by PHOCUSED shows sit-lie bills have not significantly decreased the number of homeless on the streets. The first sit-lie ordinance, covering all of Wai-kiki 24 hours a day, took effect in September.

A Council-initiated expansion during business hours in about 15 additional commercial areas was adopted in December. The number of empty emergency shelter beds in May was roughly 149, an actual increase from the 142 overall shelter vacancies in May 2014, he said.

*sidewalks of Ohe
and Olo-me-hani
streets in
Kaka-ako in
November.*

"Knowing that you consistently have this large number of empty shelter beds, even with the sit-lie enforcement ... and knowing that a significant number of our homeless population really just need to be more affordable, we wanted to look at shallow subsidies as something that could address affordability and do it pretty quickly," Mori-shige said.

Earlier this month the Council voted to override Caldwell's veto of a further expansion into other regions including the Ala Wai Canal and the Aala Park area.

The concept of shallow subsidies is also being embraced by the nonprofit Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice. Jenny Lee, Appleseed's public policy director, said the center contends shallow subsidies can be a more effective and cost-efficient use of government dollars if the goal is to get people out of homelessness.

Appleseed has had reservations about Caldwell's plan to put up modular or container-style shelter units at Sand Island for between 75 and 100 of the island's chronically homeless.

"We're opening another emergency shelter, essentially, instead of looking at something that the data suggests would be effective," Lee said.

The city's operating budget for fiscal 2016 includes \$500,000 for homeless initiatives, and at least some of that money could be allocated for shallow subsidies, Mori-shige said.

"It's clear, based on the data, that what we really need is not necessarily another emergency shelter," he said. "We have a percentage of the population that, for numerous reasons, shelters are not the best fit for them."

The Caldwell administration has set aside \$3 million annually to provide up to 115 households that meet the definition of chronically homeless with subsidies allowing them to secure rental units at private sites scattered across Oahu.

But while that program would help those who have been homeless the longest and have ancillary problems such as substance addiction or mental illness, shallow subsidies are geared toward those without such burdens, Lee said.

Morishige said that it would take less than \$1 million in shallow subsidies annually to provide about 200 homeless households \$350 a month for a year.

The advocates are not insisting that all homeless funds should go to shallow subsidies, just a portion, Mori--shige said.

"We realize there are many different levels of need," he said. "Homelessness is very complex."

Copyright (c) Honolulu Star-Advertiser