



# Issues around Homelessness

Chinatown continues to experience impacts and issues involving a high percentage of service-resistant chronic homelessness. In April 2021 the CID worked with United Chinese Society, Chinatown Business and Community Association, and others to protest an additional homeless triage facility in the area. At the time, Chinatown was home to several facilities which serviced the homeless: the Joint Outreach Triage Center, the Hygiene Center, the River of Life Feeding Operation and Housing First accommodations. The CID and other organizations argued that the Chinatown area was too small to absorb additional homeless service providers and that, rather than be concentrated in Chinatown, such services should be provided in all districts on Oahu.

Another location was found for the homeless triage center and also, since that time, the Joint Outreach Center has moved to its permanent location in Iwilei.

\*See p.2 for Impacts of Homelessness Online Survey Results

## Homeless services burden Chinatown

By Lee Stack, Teddy Chong and Chu Lan Shubert-Kwock

With to thank the Star-Advertiser for its informative article detailing plans to use federal CARES Act funding to acquire property in Chinatown for yet another homeless facility in our small, nationally historic "cultural gem," as the mayor likes to call it: "New BIS facility among virus-related city projects," May 14.

### ISLAND VOICES



Lee Stack, above left, is president of the Chinatown Improvement District, a 501(c)(3) group comprising area business, landlords and residents. Chu Lan Shubert-Kwock, above right is founder/president of the Chinatown Business & Community Association; Teddy Chong is president of the United Chinese Society of Hawaii, representing 100-plus Chinese societies and organizations.

Chinatown has become a nexus for homeless with serious addiction and mental health issues — people who at all hours roam island, about obnoxious, defecate, drink and do drugs on the streets and in the parks. People whom the city and service providers label "resistant to services."

Further, the Institute for Human Services (IHS) venture does not meet the funding criteria specified in the CARES Act, and would duplicate services already planned and funded as part of the currently operating Punahoa Rest Stop near BIS in the Iwilei area.

A city-published document says, in part, that the CARES Act requires Coronavirus Relief Funds be used only to cover necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to the 2019 coronavirus disease, and were not accounted for in the city budget approved as of March 27, 2020 (when the CARES Act was enacted).

The \$19.7 million Punahoa facility is operational on the first floor, but the second-floor medical triage center and third-floor respite beds/apartment units remain unfinished three years later. Area Councilmember Carl Fukunaga has stated: "Although I helped fund the acquisition/establishment of the Punahoa Rest Stop facilities in Iwilei between 2016-2018, the city has not released the second floor for a medical triage clinic to the IH program between 2019-2020. There is no medical clinic at that site today."



Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell, speaking, and other officials marked the first anniversary of the Punahoa Rest Stop in Iwilei in January.

Why does the city not finish that stalled project, on land that was acquired for that purpose, prior to handing property acquisition for different service providers to operate a similar facility approximately a half-mile away? Not only is this a duplication of services, but it reveals a lack of overall planning, community consultation and over-concentration of services in a small, culturally significant, densely commercial and residential district.

The address of the proposed new BIS facility is one block from nine residential towers totaling over 5,500 residents, as well as a school, a neighborhood park with playground equipment and many small Chinatown businesses.

Our organizations oppose the use of CARES Act funds for such a venture, and call for the city to complete the promised IH medical triage unit at the Punahoa Rest Stop and to distribute Housing First vouchers equitably across county districts.

<https://bit.ly/2NgxWee>

## Technical Assistance to Small Businesses in Chinatown

The CID worked with Pacific Gateway Center to provide outreach and technical assistance to Chinatown businesses impacted by the COVID pandemic. Assistance was provided to a number of small businesses in the following languages: Thai, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Laotian, Korean, and Turkish.

**PACIFIC GATEWAY CENTER**

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**時間**

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- 11月10日: 朝鮮語
- 11月11日: 退伍軍人節
- 11月12日: 越南語
- 11月13日: 日語
- 11月16日: 菲律賓語
- 11月17日: 其他語言

(808) 589-9927

歡迎語言: 泰語, 越南語, 韓語, 日語, 菲律賓語, 土耳其語, 其他語言

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The Chinatown Improvement District is a 501(c)3 charitable organization comprised of over 300 business owners, property owners, residents, and members of the general public both within and outside of Chinatown. Donations are deductible to the extent allowed by law and your respective tax status.

The organization works to improve conditions within the Chinatown historic district while also preserving the area's special cultural, ethnic and historical character.

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Fun times at the CID's 2019 Autumn Lantern Festival!

## Survey on Impacts of Homelessness

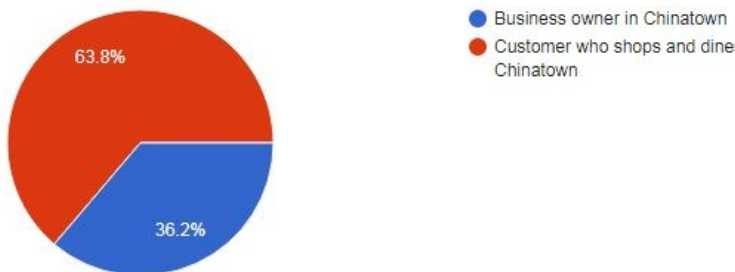
In September of 2020, the CID assisted with creating and distributing a survey to study the impacts of homelessness on businesses and customers in the Chinatown area.

The survey ran for three days in early September with responses from 98 businesses as well as over 150 customers. The graphs accompanying this article reflect only the opinions of people who filled out the survey online. The online survey results are published on the CID website under Resources & News Articles (<https://bit.ly/3aX3wFV>)

An in-person survey was also conducted on the ground in the area and the combined results are available on the Chinatownwatch.com website under: resources. Neighborhood board reports, September 2020.

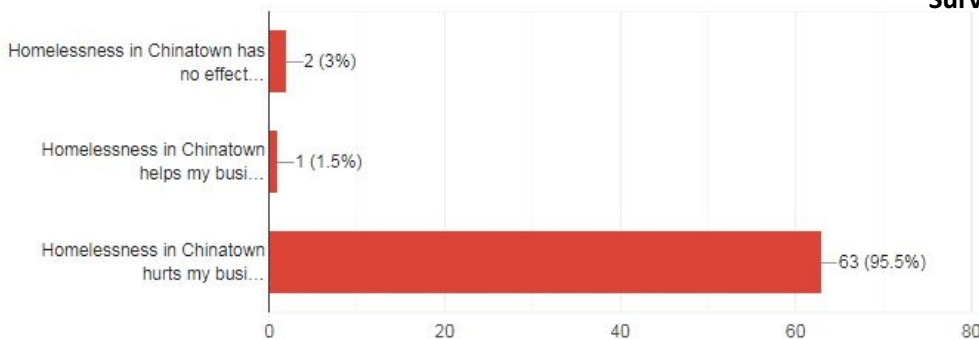
Question 1. I am a

Business owner in Chinatown  
Customer who shops and dines in Chinatown



Question 2. As a business owner in Chinatown

- a. Homelessness in Chinatown has no effect on my business - (3%)
- b. Homelessness in Chinatown helps my business (1.5%)
- c. Homelessness in Chinatown hurts my business (95.5%)



## Security Patrols

The CID community patrols have been operating during the COVID pandemic and were supported during part of the year by the remainder of a 2019 grant from Hawaii Tourism & Lodging Authority.

At this point, the program is largely self-sustaining and relies on the participation and contributions of owners and businesses throughout the Chinatown area.

In addition to the CID patrols, the City has contracted with private guard services to arrange for patrols adjacent to City owned properties in the Hotel & Maunakea Street areas. The CID has participated in meetings and efforts to provide feedback and suggestions on best practices for successful implementation of the City-funded guard services program.



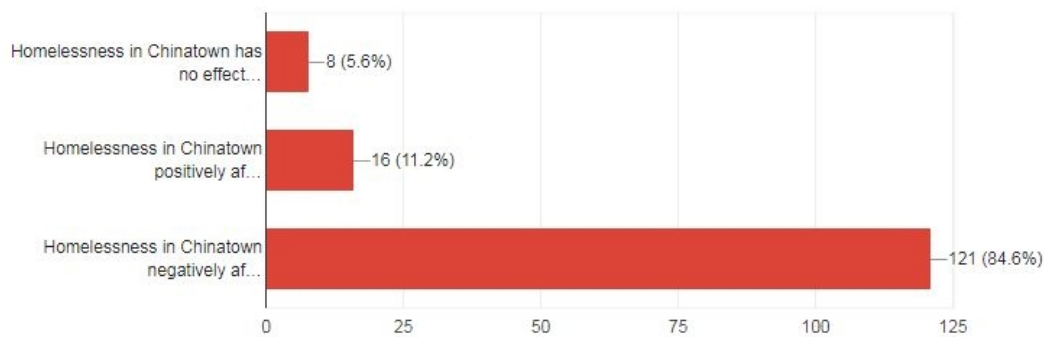
Survey questions and responses continued on page 3

## Survey on Impacts of Homelessness (continued from p.2)

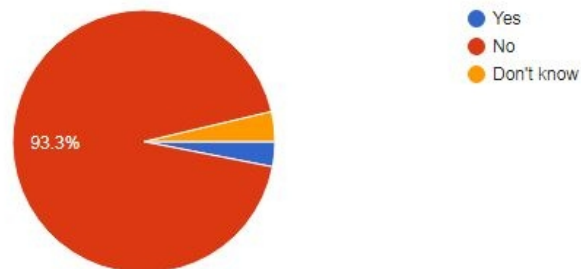
Question 4. As a customer who shops and dines in Chinatown

- a. Homelessness in Chinatown has no affect on my decision to visit Chinatown. (5.6%)
- b. Homelessness in Chinatown positively affects my decision to visit Chinatown. (11.2%\*)
- c. Homelessness in Chinatown negatively affects my decision to visit Chinatown. (84.6%)

\*includes false positives



Question 6. Do you think the homelessness situation in Chinatown has improved over the last 3 years?



The Downtown Neighborhood Board 13 passed a Resolution (Resolution 2020-012) in October 2020 regarding homeless feeding operations in the Chinatown/Downtown area. The shortened hyperlink to the Neighborhood Board Resolution on the NCO website is <https://bit.ly/2LHqYhM>