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**DOWNTOWN–CHINATOWN NEIGHBORHOOD BOARD № 13**

Resolution 2023-002

**Regarding the Impact of Facilities for the Homeless in the Chinatown–Iwilei Area**

WHEREAS, Hawai‘i has one of the highest per capita homeless rates in the nation,<sup>a</sup> and addressing this pressing societal tragedy must remain a top priority; and

WHEREAS, the *2022 Point in Time Count*<sup>b</sup> of O‘ahu’s homeless shows that while there has been a steady decrease in the number of people in homeless shelters over time on O‘ahu, its unsheltered population has remained level; and

WHEREAS, since the mid-1980s public and private entities have located facilities for O‘ahu’s homeless in Chinatown and Iwilei, and these facilities address essential needs—emergency shelter, meals, medical care, and hygiene services; and

WHEREAS, over time, given the concentration of resources for the homeless in the Chinatown–Iwilei area, the area has become a “hub” for those in need, and for the many referring agencies island-wide in search of resources for the homeless people they encounter (*e.g.*, Honolulu Police Department, social service providers, and churches); and

WHEREAS, according to the *2023 Snapshot of Facilities for the Homeless on O‘ahu by Location* report,<sup>c</sup> the Chinatown–Iwilei area has eleven homeless facilities (46% of the total number of facilities on O‘ahu), while no other area on the island has more than two facilities (and most areas have no facilities at all); and

WHEREAS, Iwilei—primarily an industrial area and no more than a 10-minute walk from Chinatown—has several major homeless facilities, including two of O‘ahu’s largest overnight emergency shelters; and

WHEREAS, homeless individuals served at Iwilei facilities tend to stay in the general area throughout the day when its facilities are not open for access, which has understandably led to many being drawn to nearby Chinatown, a community with more sidewalks, shade, and green public spaces; and

WHEREAS, given the essential nature of the services provided by homeless facilities (*e.g.*, overnight shelter, meals, or a place to shower), those served often remain near these resources for repeat access to such, which has led to increased numbers of unsheltered people on Chinatown and Iwilei streets; and

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<sup>a</sup> See Exhibit 1.6 within <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

<sup>b</sup> See page 5 of <https://www.partnersincareoahu.org/s/2022-PIT-Count-Report-7622.pdf>.

<sup>c</sup> [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1s9bopM\\_3Z5YkneP7rzGvSoxbs5MJQGi/view?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1s9bopM_3Z5YkneP7rzGvSoxbs5MJQGi/view?usp=share_link).

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WHEREAS, for the last twelve years, the Point in Time Count<sup>d</sup> on O‘ahu has reported that, of O‘ahu’s seven Regions, Region 1 (which includes the Chinatown–Iwilei area) has been where the greatest proportion of all unsheltered people on O‘ahu live; and

WHEREAS, the 2022 *Point in Time Count* notes that 65% of O‘ahu’s unsheltered homeless people report having one or more of the following disabling conditions<sup>e</sup>: mental health illness, substance use problem, HIV, or a physical, developmental, or other disability; and

WHEREAS, Downtown–Chinatown Neighborhood Board № 13, area residents, business owners, and the media have all documented for years the serious negative impacts of homelessness on Chinatown, a historically rich and densely populated neighborhood of less than one square mile; and

WHEREAS, such negative impacts from homelessness on Chinatown include poor sanitary conditions, frequent verbal and physical assaults, rampant vandalism, overt criminal activity, open drug and alcohol abuse, fears for the health and safety of pedestrians, unimpeded public urination and defecation, increasing noise pollution, and considerable loss of economic viability; and

WHEREAS, the 2020 *Chinatown Impacts of Homelessness Survey*<sup>f</sup>—which includes responses from over 95 Chinatown businesses and over 140 Chinatown customers—notes that 94% of Chinatown business owners report that homelessness in the area has hurt their respective businesses, and 83% of customers report that homelessness in Chinatown negatively affects their decision to shop and dine in the area; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Blangiardi has announced his administration’s commitment to “revitalizing Chinatown” and has taken steps to reduce the impacts of homelessness; and

WHEREAS, any effort to revitalize Chinatown will inevitably fail if it does not address a root cause of Chinatown’s homeless challenges: the disproportionate concentration of homeless facilities in the area that has forced Chinatown to shoulder a crushing share of the burden arising from O‘ahu’s homelessness crisis; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED THAT no additional facilities for O‘ahu’s homeless be located in Honolulu’s downtown–Chinatown–Iwilei area at this time; and be it further

RESOLVED THAT the City and County of Honolulu’s Office of Housing and Homelessness and the Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions explore ways to more equitably distribute homeless facilities on O‘ahu so that individual communities, such as Chinatown, are not severely impacted by the homeless crisis; and be it further

RESOLVED THAT existing homeless services now provided at Chinatown and Iwilei facilities be expanded, whenever possible, to additional sites elsewhere on O‘ahu to reduce the

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<sup>d</sup> See <https://www.partnersincareoahu.org/pit-reports> and page 14 of <https://www.partnersincareoahu.org/s/2022-PIT-Count-Report-7622.pdf>.

<sup>e</sup> See page 21 of <https://www.partnersincareoahu.org/s/2022-PIT-Count-Report-7622.pdf>.

<sup>f</sup> <https://chinatownwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Chinatown-Watch-NB-report-9320.pdf>.

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disproportionate volume of homeless individuals being served in the Chinatown–Iwilei area; and be it further

RESOLVED THAT this resolution is to be distributed upon adoption to the Mayor, the Honolulu City Council, the City and County of Honolulu’s Office of Housing and Homelessness, and the Hawai’i Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions.

Downtown–Chinatown Neighborhood Board № 13  
Introduced 6 April 2023